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VIEW

OF

THE ENGLISH STAGE.

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THE ENGLISH STAGE;

OR,

A SERIES OF DRAMATIC CRITICISMS.

46058

BY

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.

" FOR I AM NOTHING IF NOT CRITICAL."

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PREFACE.

THE Stage is one great source of public amusement, not to say instruction. A good play, well acted, passes away a whole evening delightfully at a certain period of life, agreeably at all times; we read the account of it next morning with pleasure, and it generally furnishes one leading topic of conversation for the afternoon. The disputes on the merits or defects of the last new piece, or of a favourite performer, are as common, as frequently renewed, and carried on with as much eagerness and skill, as those on almost any other subject. ROCHEFOUCAULT, I believe, it was, who said that the reason why lovers were so fond of one another's company was, that

they were always talking about themselves. The same reason almost might be given for the interest we feel in talking about plays and players; they are "the brief chronicles of the time," the epitome of human life and manners. While we are talking about them, we are thinking about ourselves. They "hold the mirror up to Nature;" and our thoughts are turned to the Stage as naturally and as fondly as a fine lady turns to contemplate her face in the glass. It is a glass too, in which the wise may see themselves; but in which the vain and superficial see their own virtues, and laugh at the follies of others. The curiosity which every one has to know how his voice and manner can be mimicked, must have been remarked or felt by most of us. It is no wonder then, that we should feel the same sort of curiosity and interest, in seeing those whose business it is to "imitate humanity" in general, and who do it sometimes "abominably," at other times admirably. Of these, some record is due to the

world; but the player's art is one that perishes with him, and leaves no traces of itself, but in the faint descriptions of the pen or pencil. Yet how eagerly do we stop to look at the prints from ZOFFANY'S pictures of GARRICK and WESTON! How much we are vexed, that so much of COLLEY CIBBER'S Life is taken up with the accounts of his own managership, and so little with those inimitable portraits which he has occasionally given of the actors of his time! How fortunate we think ourselves, when we can meet with any person who remembers the principal performers of the last age, and who can give us some distant idea of GARRICK'S nature, or of an ABINGTON'S grace! We are always indignant at SMOLLETT, for having introduced a perverse caricature of the English Roscius, which staggers our faith in his faultless excellence while reading it. On the contrary, we are pleased to collect anecdotes of this celebrated actor, which shew his power over the human heart, and enable

us to measure his genius with that of others by its effects. I have heard, for instance, that once, when GARRICK was acting Lear, the spectators in the front row of the pit, not being able to see him well in the kneeling scene, where he utters the curse, rose up, when those behind them, not willing to interrupt the scene by remonstrating, immediately rose up too, and in this manner, the whole pit rose up, without uttering a syllable, and so that you might hear a pin drop. At another time, the crown of straw which he wore in the same character fell off, or was discomposed, which would have produced a burst of laughter at any common actor to whom such an accident had happened; but such was the deep interest in the character, and such the power of rivetting the attention possessed by this actor, that not the slightest notice was taken of the circumstance, but the whole audience remained bathed in silent tears. The knowledge of circumstances like these, serves to keep alive the memory of

past excellence, and to stimulate future efforts. It was thought that a work containing a detailed account of the Stage in our own times —a period not unfruitful in theatrical genius— might not be wholly without its use.

The volume here offered to the public, is a collection of Theatrical Criticisms which have appeared with little interruption, during the last four years, in different newspapers—the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Champion*, the *Examiner*, and lastly, the *Times*. How I came to be regularly transferred from one of these papers to the other, sometimes formally and sometimes without ceremony, till I was forced to quit the last-mentioned by want of health and leisure, would make rather an amusing story, but that I do not chuse to tell "the secrets of the prison-house." I would, however, advise any one who has an ambition to write, and to write *his best*, in the periodical press, to get if possible "a situation" in the *Times* newspaper, the

Editor of which is a man of business, and not of letters. He may write there as long and as good articles as he can, without being turned out for it,—unless he should be too prolix on the subject of the BOURBONS, and in that case he may set up an opposition paper on his own account—as "one who loved not wisely but too well."

The first, and (as I think) the best articles in this series, appeared originally in the *Morning Chronicle*. They are those relating to Mr. KEAN. I went to see him the first night of his appearing in Shylock. I remember it well. The boxes were empty, and the pit not half full: "some quantity of barren spectators and idle renters were thinly scattered to make up a show." The whole presented a dreary, hopeless aspect. I was in considerable apprehension for the result. From the first scene in which Mr. KEAN came on, my doubts were at an end. I had been told to give as favourable an account

as I could: I gave a true one. I am not one of those who, when they see the sun breaking from behind a cloud, stop to ask others whether it is the moon. Mr. KEAN's appearance was the first gleam of genius breaking athwart the gloom of the Stage, and the public have since gladly basked in its ray, in spite of actors, managers, and critics. I cannot say that my opinion has much changed since that time. Why should it? I had the same eyes to see with that I have now, the same ears to hear with, and the same understanding to judge with. Why then should I not form the same judgment? My opinions have been sometimes called singular: they are merely sincere. I say what I think: I think what I feel. I cannot help receiving certain impressions from things; and I have sufficient courage to declare (somewhat abruptly) what they are. This is the only singularity I am conscious of. I do not shut my eyes to extraordinary merit because I hate it, and refuse to open them till the clamours of

others make me, and then affect to wonder extravagantly at what I have before affected hypocritically to despise. I do not make it a common practice, to think nothing of an actor or an author, because all the world have not pronounced in his favour, and after they have, to persist in condemning him, as a proof not of imbecility and ill-nature, but of independence of taste and spirit. Nor do I endeavour to communicate the infection of my own dulness, cowardice, and spleen to others, by chilling the coldness of their constitutions by the poisonous slime of vanity or interest, and setting up my own conscious inability or unwillingness to form an opinion on any one subject, as the height of candour and judgment.—I did not endeavour to persuade Mr. PERRY that Mr. KEAN was an actor that would not last, merely because he had not lasted; nor that Miss STEPHENS knew nothing of singing, because she had a sweet voice. On the contrary, I did all I could to counteract the effect of these safe, not very sound,

insinuations, and "screw the courage" of one principal organ of public opinion "to the sticking-place." I do not repent of having done so.

With respect to the spirit of partisanship in which the controversy respecting Mr. KEAN's merits as an actor was carried on, there were two or three things remarkable. One set of persons, out of the excess of their unbounded admiration, furnished him with all sorts of excellences which he did not possess or pretend to, and covered his defects from the wardrobe of their own fancies. With this class of persons,

"Pritchard's genteel, and Garrick's six feet high!"

I never enlisted in this corps of Swiss body-guards; I was even suspected of disloyalty and *leze-majesté*, because I did not cry out —*Quand meme!*—to all Mr. KEAN's stretches of the prerogatives of genius, and was placed out of the pale of theatrical orthodoxy, for not subscribing implicitly to all the

articles of belief imposed upon my senses and understanding. If you had not been to see the little man twenty times in Richard, and did not deny his being hoarse in the last act, or admire him for being so, you were looked on as a lukewarm devotee, or half an infidel. On the other hand, his detractors constantly argued not from what he was, but from what he was not. "He was not tall. He had not a fine voice. He did not play at Covent-Garden. He was not JOHN KEMBLE." This was all you could get from them, and this they thought quite sufficient to prove that he was not any thing, because he was not something quite different from himself. They did not consider that an actor might have the eye of an eagle with the voice of a raven, a "pigmy body," and "a fiery soul that o'er-informed its tenement;" that he might want grace and dignity, and yet have enough nature and passion in his breast to set up a whole corps of regular stagers. They did not enquire whether this was the case with respect to Mr.

KEAN, but took it for granted that it was not, for no other reason, than because the question had not been settled by the critics twenty or thirty years ago, and admitted by the town ever since, that is, before Mr. KEAN was born. A royal infant may be described as "un haut et puissant prince, agé d'un jour*," but a great and powerful actor cannot be known till he arrives at years of discretion, and he must be first a candidate for theatrical reputation before he can be a veteran. This is a truism, but it is one that our prejudices constantly make us not only forget, but frequently combat with all the spirit of martyrdom. I have (as it will be seen in the following pages) all along spoken freely of Mr. KEAN'S faults, or what I considered such, physical as well as intellectual; but the balance inclines decidedly to the favourable side, though not more I think than his merits exceed his defects. It was also the more neces-

* See the Fudge Family, edited by Thomas Brown, jun.

sary to dwell on the claims of an actor to public support, in proportion as they were original, and to the illiberal opposition they unhappily had to encounter. I endeavoured to prove (and with some success), that he was not "the very worst actor in the world." His Othello is what appears to me his master-piece. To those who have seen him in this part, and think little of it, I have nothing farther to say. It seems to me, as far as the mind alone is concerned, and leaving the body out of the question, fully equal to any thing of Mrs. SIDDONS's. But I hate such comparisons; and only make them on strong provocation.

Though I do not repent of what I have said in praise of certain actors, yet I wish I could retract what I have been obliged to say in reprobation of others. Public reputation is a lottery, in which there are blanks as well as prizes. The Stage is an arduous profession, requiring so many essential ex-

cellences and accidental advantages, that though it is an honour and a happiness to succeed in it, it is only a misfortune, and not a disgrace, to fail in it. Those who put themselves upon their trial, must, however, submit to the verdict; and the critic in general does little more than prevent a lingering death, by anticipating, or putting in immediate force, the sentence of the public. The victims of criticism, like the victims of the law, bear no good will to their executioners; and I confess I have often been heartily tired of so thankless an office. What I have said of any actor, has never arisen from private pique of any sort. Indeed the only person on the stage with whom I have ever had any personal intercourse, is Mr. LISTON, and of him I have not spoken "with the malice of a friend." To Mr. CONWAY and Mr. BARTLEY my apologies are particularly due: I have accused the one of being tall, and the other of being fat. I have also said that Mr. YOUNG plays not only like a

scholar, but like "a master of scholars;" that Miss O'NEILL shines more in tragedy than comedy; and that Mr. MATHEWS is an excellent mimic. I am sorry for these disclosures, which were extorted from me, but I cannot retract them. There is one observation which has been made, and which is true, that public censure hurts actors in a pecuniary point of view; but it has been forgotten, that public praise assists them in the same manner. Again, I never understood that the applauded actor thought himself personally obliged to the newspaper critic; the latter was merely supposed to do his duty. Why then should the critic be held responsible to the actor whom he *damns* by virtue of his office? Besides, as the mimic caricatures absurdity off the Stage, why should not the critic sometimes caricature it on the Stage? The children of MOMUS should not hold themselves sacred from ridicule. Though the colours may be a little heightened, the outline may be correct; and truth may be conveyed, and

the public taste improved, by an alliteration or a quibble that wounds the self-love of an individual. Authors must live as well as actors; and the *insipid* must at all events be avoided as that which the public abhors most.

I am not aware of any thing necessary to be added to this Preface, but to apologize for some repetitions to be found in the work; I mean some passages and criticisms that have been transferred to other publications, such as the account of the Beggar's Opera, Coriolanus, &c. In fact, I have come to this determination in my own mind, that a work is as good as *manuscript*, and is invested with all the same privileges, till it appears in a second edition—a rule which leaves me at liberty to make what use I please of what I have hitherto written, with the single exception of THE CHARACTERS OF SHAKESPEAR'S PLAYS.

W. HAZLITT.

April 24, 1818.

MR. KEAN'S SHYLOCK.

January 27, 1814.

Mr. Kean (of whom report has spoken highly) last night made his appearance at Drury-Lane Theatre in the character of Shylock. For voice, eye, action, and expression, no actor has come out for many years at all equal to him. The applause, from the first scene to the last, was general, loud, and uninterrupted. Indeed, the very first scene in which he comes on with Bassanio and Antonio, shewed the master in his art, and at once decided the opinion of the audience. Perhaps it was the most perfect of any. Notwithstanding the complete success of Mr. Kean in the part of Shylock, we question whether he will not become a greater favourite in other parts. There was a lightness and vigour in his tread, a buoyancy and elasticity of spirit, a fire and animation, which would accord better with almost any other character than with the morose, sullen, inward,

inveterate, inflexible malignity of Shylock. The character of Shylock is that of a man brooding over one idea, that of its wrongs, and bent on one unalterable purpose, that of revenge. In conveying a profound impression of this feeling, or in embodying the general conception of rigid and uncontroulable self-will, equally proof against every sentiment of humanity or prejudice of opinion, we have seen actors more successful than Mr. KEAN; but in giving effect to the conflict of passions arising out of the contrasts of situation, in varied vehemence of declamation, in keenness of sarcasm, in the rapidity of his transitions from one tone and feeling to another, in propriety and novelty of action, presenting a succession of striking pictures, and giving perpetually fresh shocks of delight and surprise, it would be difficult to single out a competitor. The fault of his acting was (if we may hazard the objection), an over-display of the resources of the art, which gave too much relief to the hard, impenetrable, dark ground-work of the character of Shylock. It would be endless to point out individual beauties, where almost every passage was received with equal and deserved applause. We thought, in one or two instances, the pauses in the voice were too long, and too great a reliance placed on the expression of the countenance, which is a language intelligible only to a part of the house.

The rest of the play was, upon the whole, very respectably cast. It would be an equivocal compliment to say of Miss SMITH, that her acting often reminds us of Mrs. SIDDONS. RAE played Bassanio; but the abrupt and harsh tones of his voice are not well adapted to the mellifluous cadences of SHAKESPEAR'S verse.

February 2.

Mr. KEAN appeared again in Shylock, and by his admirable and expressive manner of giving the part, fully sustained the reputation he had acquired by his former representation of it, though he laboured under the disadvantage of a considerable hoarseness. He assumed a greater appearance of age and feebleness than on the first night, but the general merit of his playing was the same. His style of acting is, if we may use the expression, more significant, more pregnant with meaning, more varied and alive in every part, than any we have almost ever witnessed. The character never stands still; there is no vacant pause in the action; the eye is never silent. For depth and force of conception, we have seen actors whom we should prefer to Mr. KEAN in Shylock; for brilliant and masterly execution, none. It is not saying too much of him, though it is saying a great deal, that he

has all that Mr. KEMBLE *wants* of perfection. He reminds us of the descriptions of the "far-darting eye" of GARRICK. We are anxious to see him in Norval and Richard, and anticipate more complete satisfaction from his performance of the latter part, than from the one in which he has already stamped his reputation with the public.

Miss SMITH played Portia with much more animation than the last time we saw her, and in delivering the fine apostrophe on Mercy, in the trial-scene, was highly impressive.

MR. KEAN'S RICHARD.

February 15.

MR. KEAN'S manner of acting this part has one peculiar advantage; it is entirely his own, without any traces of imitation of any other actor. He stands upon his own ground, and he stands firm upon it. Almost every scene had the stamp and freshness of nature. The excellences and defects of his performance were in general the same as those which he discovered in Shylock; though, as the character of Richard is the most difficult, so we think he displayed most power in it. It is possible to form a higher conception of this character (we do not mean from seeing other actors, but from reading SHAKESPEAR) than that given by this very admirable tragedian; but we cannot imagine any character represented with greater distinctness and precision, more perfectly *articulated* in every part. Perhaps, indeed, there is too much of this; for we sometimes thought he failed, even from an exuberance of

talent, and dissipated the impression of the character by the variety of his resources. To be perfect, it should have a little more solidity, depth, sustained, and impassioned feeling, with somewhat less brilliancy, with fewer glancing lights, pointed transitions, and pantomimic evolutions.

The Richard of SHAKESPEAR is towering and lofty, as well as aspiring; equally impetuous and commanding; haughty, violent, and subtle; bold and treacherous; confident in his strength, as well as in his cunning; raised high by his birth, and higher by his genius and his crimes; a royal usurper, a princely hypocrite, a tyrant, and a murderer of the House of Plantagenet.

> "But I was born so high;
> "Our airy buildeth in the cedar's top,
> "And dallies with the wind, and scorns the sun."

The idea conveyed in these lines (which are omitted in the miserable medley acted for Richard III.) is never lost sight of by SHAKESPEAR, and should not be out of the actor's mind for a moment. The restless and sanguinary Richard is not a man striving to be great, but to be greater than he is; conscious of his strength of will, his powers of intellect, his daring courage, his elevated station, and making use of these advantages, as giving him both the means and the pretext to commit un-

heard-of crimes, and to shield himself from remorse and infamy.

If Mr. KEAN does not completely succeed in concentrating all the lines of the character, as drawn by SHAKESPEAR, he gives an animation, vigour, and relief to the part, which we have never seen surpassed. He is more refined than COOKE; more bold, varied, and original than KEMBLE, in the same character. In some parts, however, we thought him deficient in dignity; and particularly in the scenes of state business, there was not a sufficient air of artificial authority. The fine assumption of condescending superiority, after he is made king—" Stand all apart—Cousin of Buckingham," &c. was not given with the effect which it might have received. There was also at times, a sort of tip-toe elevation, an enthusiastic rapture in his expectations of obtaining the crown, instead of a gloating expression of sullen delight, as if he already clutched the bauble, and held it within his grasp. This was the precise expression which Mr. KEAN gave with so much effect to the part where he says, that he already feels

" The golden rigol bind his brows."

In one who *dares* so much, there is little indeed to blame. The only two things which appeared to us decidedly objectionable, were the sudden letting down of his voice when he

says of Hastings, " chop off his head," and the action of putting his hands behind him, in listening to Buckingham's account of his reception by the citizens. His courtship scene with Lady Anne was an admirable exhibition of smooth and smiling villainy. The progress of wily adulation, of encroaching humility, was finely marked throughout by the action, voice, and eye. He seemed, like the first tempter, to approach his prey, certain of the event, and as if success had smoothed the way before him. We remember Mr. COOKE's manner of representing this scene was more violent, hurried, and full of anxious uncertainty. This, though more natural in general, was, we think, less in character. Richard should woo not as a lover, but as an actor—to shew his mental superiority, and power to make others the playthings of his will. Mr. KEAN's attitude in leaning against the side of the stage before he comes forward in this scene, was one of the most graceful and striking we remember to have seen. It would have done for Titian to paint. The opening scene in which Richard descants on his own deformity, was conceived with perfect truth and character, and delivered in a fine and varied tone of natural recitation. Mr. KEAN did equal justice to the beautiful description of the camps the night before the battle, though, in consequence of his hoarseness, he was obliged to

repeat the whole passage in an under-key*. His manner of bidding his friends good night, and his pausing with the point of his sword, drawn slowly backward and forward on the ground, before he retires to his tent, received shouts of applause. He gave to all the busy scenes of the play the greatest animation and effect. He filled every part of the stage. The concluding scene, in which he is killed by Richmond, was the most brilliant. He fought like one drunk with wounds: and the attitude in which he stands with his hands stretched out, after his sword is taken from him, had a preternatural and terrific grandeur, as if his will could not be disarmed, and the very phantoms of his despair had a withering power.

February 21.

THE house was crowded at an early hour in every part, to witness Mr. KEAN's second representation of Richard. His admirable acting received that meed of applause, which it so well deserved. His voice had not entirely recovered its tone and strength; and when (after the curtain had dropped, amidst a tumult of approba-

* The defects in the upper tones of Mr. KEAN'S voice were hardly perceptible in his performance of Shylock, and were at first attributed to hoarseness.

tion), Mr. RAE came forward to announce the play for Monday, cries of "No, no," from every part of the house, testified the sense entertained by the audience, of the impropriety of requiring the repetition of this extraordinary effort, till every physical disadvantage had been completely removed.

We have little to add to our former remarks, for Mr. KEAN went through the part nearly as before, and we saw no reason to alter our opinion. The dying scene was the most varied, and, we think, for the worse. In pronouncing the words in Richard's soliloquy, "I am myself alone," Mr. KEAN gave a quick and hurried movement to his voice, as if it was a thought that suddenly struck him, or which he wished to pass over; whereas it is the deep and rooted sentiment of his breast. The reduplication of the words in SHAKESPEAR points out the manner in which the voice should dwell upon, and as it were, brood over the feeling, loth to part with the bitter consolation. Where he says to Buckingham, "I am not i' the vein," the expression should, we imagine, be that of stifled hatred, and cold contempt, instead of sarcastic petulance. The scene tells for itself, without being pointed by the manner. In general, perhaps, if Mr. KEAN were to give to the character less of the air of an ostentatious hypocrite, of an intelligible villain, it would be more

correct, and would accord better with SHAKESPEAR'S idea of the part. The description which he has put into the mouth of Hastings, is a perfect study for the actor.

" His grace looks cheerfully and smooth this morning:
" There's some conceit or other likes him well,
" When that he bids good-morrow with such spirit.
" I think there's ne'er a man in Christendom
" Can lesser hide his hate or love than he,
" For by his face straight shall you know his heart."

In the scene with Lady Anne, in the sudden alteration of his manner to the messenger who brings him the news of Edward's illness, in the interview with Buckingham, where he desires the death of the children, in his infinitely spirited expostulation with Lord Stanley, in his triumph at the death of Buckingham, in the parting scene with his friends before the battle, in his treatment of the paper sent to Norfolk, and in all the tumult and glowing interest of the last scenes of the play, we had fresh cause for admiration. It were in vain, however, to point out particular beauties; for the research, the ingenuity, and the invention manifested throughout the character are endless. We have said before, and we still think so, that there is even too much effect given, too many significant hints, too much appearance of study. There is a tone in acting, as well as in painting, which is the

chief and master excellence. Our highest conception of an actor is, that he shall assume the character once for all, and be it throughout, and trust to this conscious sympathy for the effect produced. Mr. KEAN'S manner of acting is, on the contrary, rather a perpetual assumption of his part, always brilliant and successful, almost always true and natural, but yet always a distinct effort in every new situation, so that the actor does not seem entirely to forget himself, or to be identified with the character. The extreme elaboration of the parts injures the broad and massy effect; the general impulse of the machine is retarded by the variety and intricacy of the movements. But why do we try this actor by an ideal theory? Who is there that will stand the same test? It is, in fact, the last forlorn hope of criticism, for it shews that we have nothing else to compare him with. "Take him for all in all," it will be long, very long, before we "look upon his like again," if we are to wait as long as we *have* waited.

We wish the introduction of the ghosts through the trap-doors of the stage were altogether omitted. The speeches, which they address to Richard, might be delivered just as well from behind the scenes. These sort of exhibitions are only proper for a superstitious age; and in an age not superstitious, excite ridicule instead of terror. Mr. WROUGHTON makes a very sub-

stantial ghost, and Miss BOYCE retains the same ruddy appearance of flesh and blood, and the same graceful *embonpoint*, which so well became her in the scene where she was wooed by Richard. Mrs. GLOVER'S Queen was more natural and impressive than on the first night, because it was less turbulent; and if she would use still less vociferation, she would produce a still greater effect—" For in the very torrent and whirlwind of the passion, you should acquire a temperance that may give it smoothness."

Mr. KEAN'S acting in Richard, as we before remarked in his Shylock, presents a perpetual succession of striking pictures. He bids fair to supply us with the best Shakespear Gallery we have had!

MR. KEAN'S HAMLET.

March 14.

THAT which distinguishes the dramatic productions of SHAKESPEAR from all others, is the wonderful variety and perfect individuality of his characters. Each of these is as much itself, and as absolutely independent of the rest, as if they were living persons, not fictions of the mind. The poet appears for the time being, to be identified with the character he wishes to represent, and to pass from one to the other, like the same soul, successively animating different bodies. By an art like that of the ventriloquist, he throws his imagination out of himself, and makes every word appear to proceed from the very mouth of the person whose name it bears. His plays alone are properly expressions of the passions, not descriptions of them. His characters are real beings of flesh and blood; they speak like men, not like authors. One might

suppose that he had stood by at the time, and had overheard what passed. Each object and circumstance seems to exist in his mind as it existed in nature; each several train of thought and feeling goes on of itself without effort or confusion; in the world of his imagination every thing has a life, a place and being of its own.

These remarks are, we think, as applicable to Hamlet, as to any of SHAKESPEAR'S tragedies. It is, if not the finest, perhaps the most inimitable of all his productions. Lear is first, for the profound intensity of the passion: Macbeth, for the wildness of the imagination, and the glowing rapidity of the action: Othello, for the progressive interest, and rapid alternations of feeling: Hamlet, for perfect dramatic truth, and the unlooked-for development of sentiment and character. SHAKESPEAR has in this play shewn more of the magnanimity of genius, than in any other. There is no attempt to force an interest, but every thing is left to time and circumstances. The interest is excited without premeditation or effort, the events succeed each other as matters of course, the characters think, and speak and act just as they would do, if they were left to themselves. The whole play is an exact transcript of what might have taken place at the Court of Denmark five hundred years ago, before the modern refinements in morality and manners.

The character of Hamlet is itself a pure effusion of genius. It is not a character marked by strength of passion or will, but by refinement of thought and feeling. Hamlet is as little of the hero as a man can well be; but he is "a young and princely novice," full of high enthusiasm and quick sensibility—the sport of circumstances, questioning with fortune, and refining on his own feelings, and forced from the natural bias of his character, by the strangeness of his situation. He seems incapable of deliberate action, and is only hurried into extremities on the spur of the occasion, when he has no time to reflect, as in the scene where he kills Polonius, and where he alters the letters which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern take with them. At other times, he remains puzzled, undecided, and sceptical, dallies with his purposes till the occasion is lost, and always finds some reason to relapse into indolence and thoughtfulness again. For this reason he refuses to kill the King when he is at his prayers, and by a refinement in malice, which is only an excuse for his own want of resolution, defers his revenge to some more fatal opportunity, when he shall be engaged in some act "that has no relish of salvation in it." So he scruples to trust the suggestions of the Ghost, contrives the scene of the play to have surer proof of his uncle's guilt, and then rests satisfied with this confirmation of his

suspicions, and the success of his experiment, instead of acting upon it. The moral perfection of this character has been called in question. It is more natural than conformable to rules; and if not more amiable, is certainly more dramatic on that account. Hamlet is not, to be sure, a Sir Charles Grandison. In general, there is little of the drab-coloured quakerism of morality in the ethical delineations of "that noble and liberal casuist," as SHAKESPEAR has been well called. He does not set his heroes in the stocks of virtue, to make mouths at their own situation. His plays are not transcribed from the Whole Duty of Man! We confess, we are a little shocked at the want of refinement in those, who are shocked at the want of refinement in Hamlet. The want of punctilious exactness of behaviour either partakes of the "license of the time," or belongs to the very excess of intellectual refinement in the character, which makes the common rules of life, as well as his own purposes, sit loose upon him. He may be said to be amenable only to the tribunal of his own thoughts, and is too much occupied with the airy world of contemplation to lay as much stress as he ought on the practical consequences of things. His habitual principles of action are unhinged, and "out of joint" with the time.

This character is probably of all others the

most difficult to personate on the stage. It is like the attempt to embody a shadow.

> " Come then, the colours and the ground prepare,
> " Dip in the rainbow, trick her off in air,
> " Chuse a firm cloud, before it falls, and in it
> " Catch, 'ere she change, the Cynthia of a minute."

Such nearly is the task which the actor imposes on himself in the part of Hamlet. It is quite remote from hardness and dry precision. The character is spun to the finest thread, yet never loses its continuity. It has the yielding flexibility of " a wave of the sea." It is made up of undulating lines, without a single sharp angle. There is no set purpose, no straining at a point. The observations are suggested by the passing scene—the gusts of passion come and go, like the sounds of music borne on the wind. The interest depends not on the action, but on the thoughts—on " that within which passeth shew." Yet, in spite of these difficulties, Mr. KEAN's representation of the character had the most brilliant success. It did not indeed come home to our feelings, as Hamlet (that very Hamlet whom we read of in our youth, and seem almost to remember in our after-years), but it was a most striking and animated rehearsal of the part.

High as Mr. KEAN stood in our opinion before, we have no hesitation in saying, that he

stands higher in it (and, we think, will in that of the public), from the powers displayed in this last effort. If it was less perfect as a whole, there were parts in it of a higher cast of excellence than any part of his Richard. We will say at once, in what we think his general delineation of the character wrong. It was too strong and pointed. There was often a severity, approaching to virulence, in the common observations and answers. There is nothing of this in Hamlet. He is, as it were, wrapped up in the cloud of his reflections, and only *thinks aloud*. There should therefore be no attempt to impress what he says upon others by any exaggeration of emphasis or manner, no talking *at* his hearers. There should be as much of the gentleman and scholar as possible infused into the part, and as little of the actor. A pensive air of sadness should sit unwillingly upon his brow, but no appearance of fixed and sullen gloom. He is full of "weakness and melancholy," but there is no harshness in his nature. Hamlet should be the most amiable of misanthropes. There is no one line in this play, which should be spoken like any one line in Richard; yet Mr. KEAN did not appear to us to keep the two characters always distinct. He was least happy in the last scene with Guildenstern and Rosencrantz. In some of these more familiar scenes he displayed more energy than

was requisite; and in others where it would have been appropriate, did not rise equal to the exigency of the occasion. In particular, the scene with Laertes, where he leaps into the grave, and utters the exclamation, " 'Tis I, Hamlet the Dane," had not the tumultuous and overpowering effect we expected from it. To point out the defects of Mr. KEAN's performance of the part, is a less grateful but a much shorter task, than to enumerate the many striking beauties which he gave to it, both by the power of his action and by the true feeling of nature. His surprise when he first sees the Ghost, his eagerness and filial confidence in following it, the impressive pathos of his action and voice in addressing it, " I'll call thee Hamlet, *Father*, Royal Dane," were admirable.

Mr. KEAN has introduced in this part a *new reading*, as it is called, which we think perfectly correct. In the scene where he breaks from his friends to obey the command of his father, he keeps his sword pointed behind him, to prevent them from following him, instead of holding it before him to protect him from the Ghost. The manner of his taking Guildenstern and Rosencrantz under each arm, under pretence of communicating his secret to them, when he only means to trifle with them, had the finest effect, and was, we conceive, exactly in the spirit of the character. So was the suppressed tone of

irony in which he ridicules those who gave ducats for his uncle's picture, though they would "make mouths at him," while his father lived. Whether the way in which Mr. KEAN hesitates in repeating the first line of the speech in the interview with the player, and then, after several ineffectual attempts to recollect it, suddenly hurries on with it, "The rugged Pyrrhus," &c. is in perfect keeping, we have some doubts: but there was great ingenuity in the thought; and the spirit and life of the execution was beyond every thing. Hamlet's speech in describing his own melancholy, his instructions to the players, and the soliloquy on death, were all delivered by Mr. KEAN in a tone of fine, clear, and natural recitation. His pronunciation of the word "contumely" in the last of these, is, we apprehend, not authorized by custom, or by the metre.

Both the closet scene with his mother, and his remonstrances to Ophelia, were highly impressive. If there had been less vehemence of effort in the latter, it would not have lost any of its effect. But whatever nice faults might be found in this scene, they were amply redeemed by the manner of his coming back after he has gone to the extremity of the stage, from a pang of parting tenderness to press his lips to Ophelia's hand. It had an electrical effect on the house. It was the finest commentary that was

ever made on SHAKESPEAR. It explained the character at once (as he meant it), as one of disappointed hope, of bitter regret, of affection suspended, not obliterated, by the distractions of the scene around him! The manner in which Mr. KEAN acted in the scene of the Play before the King and Queen was the most daring of any, and the force and animation which he gave to it, cannot be too highly applauded. Its extreme boldness "bordered on the verge of all we hate," and the effect it produced, was a test of the extraordinary powers of this extraordinary actor.

We cannot speak too highly of Mr. RAYMOND'S representation of the Ghost. It glided across the stage with the preternatural grandeur of a spirit. His manner of speaking the part was not equally excellent. A spirit should not whine or shed tears.

Mr. DOWTON'S Polonius was unworthy of so excellent an actor. The part was mistaken altogether. Polonius is not exceedingly wise, but he is not quite a fool; or if he is, he is at the same time a courtier, and a courtier of the old school. Mr. DOWTON made nothing, or worse than nothing, of the part.

MR. KEAN'S OTHELLO.

May 6.

OTHELLO was acted at Drury-Lane last night, the part of Othello by Mr. KEAN. His success was fully equal to the arduousness of the undertaking. In general, we might observe that he displayed the same excellences and the same defects as in his former characters. His voice and person were not altogether in consonance with the character, nor was there throughout, that noble tide of deep and sustained passion, impetuous, but majestic, that "flows on to the Propontic, and knows no ebb," which raises our admiration and pity of the lofty-minded Moor. There were, however, repeated bursts of feeling and energy which we have never seen surpassed. The whole of the latter part of the third act was a master-piece of profound pathos and exquisite conception, and its effect on the house was electrical. The tone

of voice in which he delivered the beautiful apostrophe, " Then, oh farewell!" struck on the heart and the imagination like the swelling notes of some divine music. The look, the action, the expression of voice, with which he accompanied the exclamation, " Not a jot, not a jot;" the reflection, " I felt not *Cassio's kisses* on her lips;" and his vow of revenge against Cassio, and abandonment of his love for Desdemona, laid open the very tumult and agony of the soul. In other parts, where we expected an equal interest to be excited, we were disappointed; and in the common scenes, we think Mr. KEAN's manner, as we have remarked on other occasions, had more point and emphasis than the sense or character required*.

The rest of the play was by no means judiciously cast; indeed, almost every individual appeared to be out of his proper place.

* For a fuller account of Mr. KEAN'S Othello, see one of the last articles in this volume.

MR. KEAN'S IAGO.

May 9.

THE part of Iago was played at Drury-Lane on Saturday by Mr. KEAN, and played with admirable facility and effect. It was the most faultless of his performances, the most consistent and entire. Perhaps the accomplished hypocrite was never so finely, so adroitly pourtrayed—a gay, light-hearted monster, a careless, cordial, comfortable villain. The preservation of character was so complete, the air and manner were so much of a piece throughout, that the part seemed more like a detached scene or single *trait*, and of shorter duration than it usually does. The ease, familiarity, and tone of nature with which the text was delivered, were quite equal to any thing we have seen in the best comic acting. It was the least overdone of all his parts, though full of point, spirit, and brilliancy. The odiousness of the character was

in fact, in some measure, glossed over by the extreme grace, alacrity and rapidity of the execution. Whether this effect were "a consummation of the art devoutly to be wished," is another question, on which we entertain some doubts. We have already stated it as our opinion, that Mr. KEAN is not a literal transcriber of his author's text; he translates his characters with great freedom and ingenuity into a language of his own; but at the same time we cannot help preferring his liberal and spirited dramatic versions, to the dull, literal, commonplace monotony of his competitors. Besides, after all, in the conception of the part, he may be right, and we may be wrong. We have before complained that Mr. KEAN's Richard was not gay enough, and we should now be disposed to complain that his Iago is not grave enough.

Mr. SOWERBY's Othello, we are sorry to add, was a complete failure, and the rest of the play was very ill got up.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

Dec. 1, 1813.

SHAKESPEAR's tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra was brought out last night at Covent-Garden with alterations, and with considerable additions from DRYDEN's All for Love. The piece seems to have been in some measure got up for the occasion, as there are several claptraps in the speeches, which admit of an obvious allusion to passing characters and events, and which were eagerly seized by the audience. Of the execution of the task which the compiler has imposed upon himself, we cannot speak in terms of much praise. Almost all the transpositions of passages which he has attempted, are, we think, injudicious and injurious to the effect. Thus the rich and poetical description of the person of Cleopatra, in the beginning of the second act—" The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne, burnt on the water," &c.

which prepares the way for, and almost seems to justify the subsequent infatuation of Antony, is here postponed till near the catastrophe, where it answers no end, and excites little interest. It would also have been much better, if the author had contented himself merely with omitting certain passages, which he might deem objectionable to a modern audience, without encumbering either the plot or dialogue with any foreign interpolation. He might have separated the gold of SHAKESPEAR from the alloy which at times accompanies it, but he ought not to have mixed it up with the heavy tinsel of DRYDEN. We cannot approve of the attempt to effect "an amalgamation of the wonderful powers" of these writers, who are, in the preface to the printed play, classed together as "two of England's greatest poets." There is not the slightest comparison between them, either in kind or degree. There is all the difference between them, that can subsist between artificial and natural passion. DRYDEN never goes out of himself; he is a man of strong sense and powerful feeling, reasoning upon what he should feel in certain situations, and expressing himself in studied declamation, in general topics, expanding and varying the stock of his own ideas, so as to produce a tolerable resemblance to those of mankind in different situations, and building up, by the aid of logic

and rhetoric—that is, by means of certain truths and images, generally known and easily applied, a stately and impressive poem. Whereas SHAKESPEAR does not suppose himself to be others, but at once *becomes* them. His imagination passes out of himself into them, and as it were, transmits to him their feelings and circumstances. Nothing is made out by inference and analogy, by climax and antithesis, but all comes immediately from nature—the thoughts, the images, the very words are hers. His plays can only be compared with Nature—they are unlike every thing else.

Antony and Cleopatra, though not in the first order of SHAKESPEAR's productions, is one of the best of his historical plays. It is every where full of that pervading comprehensive power, by which the poet seemed to identify himself with time and nature. The pomp and voluptuous charms of Cleopatra are displayed in all their force and lustre, as well as the effeminate grandeur of the soul of Mark Antony. The repentance of Enobarbus after his treachery to his master, the most beautiful and affecting part of the play, is here, for some reason, entirely omitted. Nothing can have more local truth and perfect character than the passage in which Cleopatra is represented as conjecturing what were the employments of Antony in his absence. "He's speaking now, or murmuring—

" where's my serpent of old Nile?" Or again, when she says to Antony, after the defeat of Actium, and his resolution to risk another fight—" It is my birth-day; I had thought to have held it poor, but since my Lord is Antony again, I will be Cleopatra." The transition, in the present compilation, from these flashes of genius which lay open the inmost soul, to the forced mechanical style and architectural dialogue of DRYDEN, is abrupt and painful.

The play was got up with every advantage of external pomp and decoration. Mr. YOUNG, as Mark Antony, exhibited a just and impressive picture of the Roman hero, struggling between the dictates of his love and honour. Mrs. M'GIBBON was a respectable and interesting representative of Octavia. Mrs. FAUCIT's Cleopatra conveyed at least a reflex image of the voluptuous magnificence of the Queen of Egypt. In the ironical scenes with Antony, her manner sometimes bordered too much on the affected levity of a modern fine lady, and wanted the passion and dignity of the enamoured and haughty sovereign. In the part of Ventidius, we are sorry to say, that we think Mr. TERRY was by no means successful. His manner had all the turbulent ferocity of a gloomy savage, none of the lofty firmness of the Roman Senator. The expression of the passion was every where too coarse and too physical; his muscles assumed

a preternatural rigidity, and the mode in which he articulated every sentence was distinct, almost to dislocation. The house, however, seemed to be of a different opinion; for, in the several scenes with Mr. YOUNG, he was loudly and tumultuously applauded.

ARTAXERXES.

Sept. 24, 1813.

Miss Stephens made her appearance again on Saturday at Covent-Garden, as Mandane, in Artaxerxes. She becomes more and more a favourite with the public. Her singing is delicious; but admired as it is, it is not yet admired as it ought to be. Oh, if she had been wafted to us from Italy!—A voice more sweet, varied, and flexible, was perhaps never heard on an English stage. In "The Soldier tired," her voice, though it might be said to cleave the very air, never once lost its sweetness and clearness. "Let not rage thy bosom firing" was deservedly and rapturously encored. But if we were to express a preference, it would be to her singing the lines, "What was my pride is now my shame," &c. in which the notes seemed to fall from her lips like the liquid drops from the bending flower, and her voice fluttered and died

away with the expiring conflict of passion in her bosom. We know, and have felt the divine power and impassioned tones of CATALANI—the lightning of her voice and of her eye—but we doubt whether she would give the ballad style of the songs in Artaxerxes, simple but elegant, chaste but full of expression, with equal purity, taste, and tenderness.

Mr. LISTON's acting in Love, Law, and Physic, was as excellent as it always is. It is hard to say, whether the soul of Mr. LISTON has passed into Mr. Lubin Log, or that of Mr. Lubin Log into Mr. LISTON:—but a most wonderful congeniality and mutual good understanding there is between them. A more perfect personation we never witnessed. The happy compound of meanness, ignorance, vulgarity, and conceit, was given with the broadest effect, and with the nicest discrimination of feeling. MOLIERE would not have wished for a richer representative of his *Gentilhomme Bourgeois.* We insist the more on this point, because of all imitations we like the imitation of nature best. The marked *cockneyism* of pronouncing the V for the W, was the only circumstance to which we could object, and this is an interpolation on the part since we first saw it, suggested (we suppose) by friends. It is a hackneyed and cheap way of producing a laugh, unworthy of the true comic genius of LISTON.

THE BEGGAR'S OPERA.

Oct. 23, 1813.

THE Beggar's Opera was acted at Covent-Garden last night, for the purpose of introducing Miss STEPHENS in the character of Polly. The play itself is among the most popular of our dramas, and one which the public are always glad to have some new excuse for seeing acted again. Its merits are peculiarly its own. It not only delights, but instructs us, without our knowing how, and though it is at first view equally offensive to good taste and common decency. The materials, indeed, of which it is composed, the scenes, characters, and incidents, are in general of the lowest and most disgusting kind; but the author, by the sentiments and reflections which he has put into the mouths of highwaymen, turnkeys, their wives and daughters, has converted the motley groupe into a set of fine gentlemen and ladies, satirists, and philo-

s.phers. What is still more extraordinary, he has effected this transformation without once violating probability, or "o'erstepping the modesty of nature." In fact, GAY has in this instance turned the tables on the critics; and by the assumed license of the mock-heroic style, has enabled himself to *do justice to nature*, that is, to give all the force, truth, and locality of real feeling to the thoughts and expressions, without being called to the bar of false taste, and affected delicacy. We might particularly refer to Polly's description of the death of her lover, and to the song, "Woman is like the fair flower in its lustre," the extreme beauty and feeling of which are only equalled by their characteristic propriety and *naivete*. Every line of this sterling Comedy sparkles with wit, and is fraught with the keenest and bitterest invective.

It has been said by a great moralist, "There is some soul of goodness in things evil;" and The Beggar's Opera is a good-natured, but severe comment on this text. The poet has thrown all the gaiety and sunshine of the imagination, the intoxication of pleasure, and the vanity of despair, round the short-lived existence of his heroes, while Peachum and Lockitt are seen in the back ground, parcelling out their months and weeks between them. The general view of human life is of the most refined and

abstracted kind. With the happiest art, the author has brought out the good qualities and interesting emotions almost inseparable from humanity in the lowest situations, and with the same penetrating glance, has detected the disguises which rank and circumstance lend to exalted vice. It may be said that the moral of the piece (which some respectable critics have been at a loss to discover), *is to shew the vulgarity of vice;* or that the sophisms with which the great and powerful palliate their violations of integrity and decorum, are, in fact, common to them with the vilest, most abandoned and contemptible of the species. What can be more galling than the arguments used by these would-be politicians, to prove that in hypocrisy, selfishness, and treachery, they are far behind some of their betters? The exclamation of Mrs. Peachum, when her daughter marries Macheath, "Hussey, hussey, you will be as ill used and as much neglected as if you had married a Lord," is worth all Miss HANNAH MORE'S laboured invectives on the laxity of the manners of high life!

The innocent and amiable Polly found a most interesting representative in Miss STEPHENS. Her acting throughout was simple, unaffected, graceful, and full of tenderness. Her tones in speaking, though low, and suited to the gentleness of the character, were distinct, and varied with

great flexibility. She will lose by her performance of this part, none of the reputation she has gained in Mandane. The manner in which she gave the song in the first act, "But he so teazed me," &c. was sweetness itself: the notes undulated through the house, amidst murmurs of rapturous applause. She gave equal animation and feeling to the favourite air, "Cease your funning." To this, however, as well as to some other of the songs, a more dramatic effect might perhaps be given. There is a severity of feeling, and a plaintive sadness, both in the words and music of the songs in this Opera, on which too much stress cannot be laid.

Oct. 28.

Miss Stephens made her appearance again last night at Covent-Garden, in Polly, with additional lustre. Her timidity was overcome, and her voice was exerted in all its force and sweetness. We find so much real taste, elegance, and feeling, in this very delightful singer, that we cannot help repeating our praise of her, though, perhaps, by so doing, we shall only irritate the sullen fury of certain formidable critics, at the appearance of a new favourite of the public. We are aware that there is a class

of connoisseurs whose envy it might be prudent to disarm, by some compromise with their perverted taste; who are horror-struck at grace and beauty, and who can only find relief and repose in the consoling thoughts of deformity and defect; whose blood curdles into poison at deserved reputation, who shudder at every temptation *to admire*, as an unpardonable crime, and shrink from whatever gives delight to others, with more than monkish self-denial. These kind of critics are well described by MOLIERE, as displaying, on all occasions, an invincible hatred for what the rest of the world admire, and an inconceivable partiality for those perfections which none but themselves can discover. The secret both of their affection and enmity is the same—their pride is mortified with whatever can give pleasure, and soothed with what excites only pity or indifference. They search out with scrupulous malice, the smallest defect or excess of every kind: it is only when it becomes painfully oppressive to every one else, that they are reconciled to it. A critic of this order is dissatisfied with the *embonpoint* of Miss STEPHENS; while his eye reposes with perfect self-complacency on the little round graces of Mrs. LISTON's person!

RICHARD CŒUR DE LION.

May 27, 1814.

Richard Cœur de Lion was brought out last night at Covent-Garden, in which Miss Stephens made her appearance in the character of Matilda. She looked and spoke the part well, but the favourite pathetic air of "Oh, Richard! oh, my love," was omitted, we suppose in consequence of indisposition.

The new farce, called "Tricking's fair in Love," followed, but with little success; for after being heard out with great fairness, it was decidedly condemned at last, notwithstanding some inimitable acting by Liston as Count Hottentot. We never saw his face in a state of higher keeping. It was quite rich and unctuous.

A young lady (Miss Foote) afterwards made her first appearance in Amanthis. Her face and figure excited the liveliest interest as soon as she

appeared; which her manner of executing the part did not diminish, but increased as she proceeded. Her voice possesses great clearness and sweetness, and her enunciation is exceedingly distinct and articulate, without any appearance of labour. Her features are soft and regular. She perfectly answered to the idea which we form of youth, beauty, grace, and artless innocence in the original character. She seemed to be, indeed, the Child of Nature, such as

"Youthful poets fancy when they love."

Her reception throughout was flattering in the highest degree.

DIDONE ABANDONNATA.

August 8, 1814.

The Opera closed for the season on Saturday last. We attended on this farewell occasion, without any strong feelings of regret for the past, or of sanguine expectations for the future. The Opera, from its constant and powerful appeals to the senses, by imagery, by sound, and motion, is well calculated to amuse or stimulate the intellectual languor of those classes of society, on whose support it immediately depends. This is its highest aim, and its appropriate use. But, without the aid of luxurious pomp, what can there be to interest in this merely artificial vehicle of show, and dance, and song, which is purposely constructed so as to lull every effort of the understanding and feeling of the heart in the soft, soothing effeminacy of sensual enjoyment? The Opera Muse is not a beautiful virgin who can hope to charm by

simplicity and sensibility; but a tawdry courtesan, who, when her paint and patches, her rings and jewels are stripped off, can excite only disgust and ridicule. This is the state to which she has been reduced by dissentions among her keepers for the last season.—Nothing could be more unpleasant than the impression produced on our minds by the exhibition of Saturday last. Tattered hanging fragments of curtains, disjointed machinery, silver pannels turned black, a few thinly scattered lamps badly lighted, were among the various circumstances which threw a damp over our spirits. Bankruptcy every where stared us in the face. The general *coup d'œil* of the theatre had no affinity with gaiety or grandeur. The whole had the melancholy appearance, without any of the sublimity, of some relic of eastern magnificence.

The Opera was Didone Abandonnata, in which Madame GRASSINI performed the part of the unfortunate Queen, and Signor TRAMEZZANI (appearing for the last time on the English stage), that of the faithless Æneas. During the greater part of the first act, there was hardly any body in the pit, and nobody in the boxes. The performance evidently partook of the apathy of the public. We do not know otherwise how to account for the undress manner in which Madame GRASSINI acted the part of Dido. She walked through it with the most perfect indifference, or

as if she had been at a morning rehearsal before empty benches. The graceful dignity of the character never left her, but it was the habitual grace of a queen surrounded by her maids of honour, not the impassioned energy of a queen enamoured of the son of a goddess, and courted by Numidian kings. Even after the desertion of Æneas, and when the flames of her capital were surrounding her, the terror and agitation she displayed did not amount to the anxiety of a common assignation-scene; her trills and quavers very artfully mimicked the uncertain progress of the tremulous flames; and she at last left the stage, not as if rushing in an agony of despair to her fate, but with the hurry and alarm of a person who is afraid of being detected in a clandestine correspondence. In some passages, however, both of the recitative and the songs, the beauty of the movement or the force of the sentiment drew from her tones of mingled grace and energy, which "might create a soul under the ribs of death." This effect seemed to be purely involuntary, and not to proceed from any desire to gratify the audience, or to do justice to the part she had to sustain.

The same objections cannot be applied to the acting of Signor Tramezzani, in which there was no want of animation or effort. We are not among this gentleman's enthusiastic admirers; at the same time we would not wish to speak of

him more contemptuously than he deserves. There is, we think, in general, considerable propriety in his conception, and great spirit in his execution; but it is almost universally carried into grimace and caricature. His heroes have the fierceness of bullies; his lovers are the fondest creatures;—his frowns and his smiles seem alike fated to kill. We object most to the latter. Signor TRAMEZZANI is really too prodigal of his physical accomplishments: his acting is quite of the amatory kind. We see no reason why Æneas, because Dido takes him by the hand, should ogle the sweet heavens with such tender glances, nor why his lips should feed on the imagination of a kiss, as if he had tasted marmalade. Signor TRAMEZZANI's amorous raptures put us in mind of the pious ardours of a female saint, who sighs out her soul at some divine man at a conventicle. We hate such fulsome fooleries.

After the Opera "God save the King" was sung. The first verse was given by Madame GRASSINI, with that ease and simplicity which are natural to her. The second was torn to tatters by Signor TRAMEZZANI with every preposterous accompaniment of imitative action. Into the homely couplet,

"Scatter his enemies,
"And make them fall,"

he introduced as much heroic action, as if Jove, in the first line, had had to shake a thousand thunderbolts from his hand, and in the next to transfix the giants to the earth. The bow with which this celebrated actor quitted the stage was endless and inimitable. The Genius of Scotland would have turned pale with envy at the sight! Of the other performers we shall say nothing. M. Vestris made an able-bodied representative of Zephyr in the ballet.

MISS O'NEILL'S JULIET.

August 15, 1814.

We occasionally see something on the stage that reminds us a little of Shakespear. Miss O'Neill's Juliet, if it does not correspond exactly with our idea of the character, does not degrade it. We never saw Garrick; and Mrs. Siddons was the only person who ever embodied our idea of high tragedy. Her mind and person were both fitted for it. The effect of her acting was greater than could be conceived before-hand. It perfectly filled and overpowered the mind. The first time of seeing this great actress was an epoch in every one's life, and left impressions which could never be forgotten. She appeared to belong to a superior order of beings, to be surrounded with a personal awe, like some prophetess of old, or Roman matron, the mother of Coriolanus or the Gracchi. Her voice answered to her form, and her expression to both. Yet

she was a pantomime actress. Her common recitation was faulty. It was in bursts of indignation, or grief, in sudden exclamations, in apostrophes and inarticulate sounds, that she raised the soul of passion to its height, or sunk it in despair.

We remember her manner in the Gamester, when Stukeley, (it was then played by Palmer), declares his love to her. The look, first of incredulity and astonishment, then of anger, then passing suddenly into contempt, and ending in bitter scorn, and a convulsive burst of laughter, all given in a moment, and laying open every movement of the soul, produced an effect which we shall never forget. Her manner of rubbing her hands, in the night scene in Macbeth, and of dismissing the guests at the banquet, were among her finest things. We have, many years ago, wept outright during the whole time of her playing Isabella, and this we take to have been a higher employment of the critical faculties than doubling down the book in dog-ears to make out a regular list of critical common-places. To the tears formerly shed on such occasions, we may apply the words of a modern dashing orator, "Sweet is the dew of their memory, and pleasant the balm of their recollection."

We have, we believe, been betrayed into this digression, because Miss O'Neill, more than any late actress, reminded us in certain passages,

and in a faint degree, of Mrs. Siddons. This young lady, who will probably become a favourite with the public, is rather tall; and though not *of the first order of fine forms*, her figure is of that respectable kind, which will not interfere with the characters she represents. Her deportment is not particularly graceful: there is a heaviness, and want of firmness about it. Her features are regular, and the upper part of her face finely expressive of terror or sorrow. It has that mixture of beauty and passion which we admire so much in some of the antique statues. The lower part of her face is not equally good. From a want of fulness or flexibility about the mouth, her laugh is not at any time pleasing, and where it is a laugh of terror, is distorted and painful. Her voice, without being musical, is distinct, powerful, and capable of every necessary exertion. Her action is impressive and simple. She looks the part she has to perform, and fills up the pauses in the words, by the varied expression of her countenance or gestures, without any thing artificial, pointed, or far-fetched.

In the silent expression of feeling, we have seldom witnessed any thing finer than her acting, where she is told of Romeo's death, her listening to the Friar's story of the poison, and her change of manner towards the Nurse, when she advises her to marry Paris. Her delivery of the speeches in the scenes where she laments Romeo's banish-

ment, and anticipates her waking in the tomb, marked the fine play and undulation of natural sensibility, rising and falling with the gusts of passion, and at last worked up into an agony of despair, in which imagination approaches the brink of frenzy. Her actually screaming at the imaginary sight of Tybalt's ghost, appeared to us the only instance of extravagance or caricature. Not only is there a distinction to be kept up between physical and intellectual horror, (for the latter becomes more general, internal, and absorbed, in proportion as it becomes more intense), but the scream, in the present instance, startled the audience, as it preceded the speech which explained its meaning. Perhaps the emphasis given to the exclamation, "*And Romeo banished,*" and to the description of Tybalt, "*festering in his shroud,*" was too much in that epigrammatic, pointed style, which we think inconsistent with the severe and simple dignity of tragedy.

In the last scene, at the tomb with Romeo, which, however, is not from SHAKESPEAR, though it tells admirably on the stage, she did not produce the effect we expected. Miss O'NEILL seemed least successful in the former part of the character, in the garden scene, &c. The expression of tenderness bordered on hoydening, and affectation. The character of Juliet is a pure effusion of nature. It is as serious, and as much

in earnest, as it is frank and susceptible. It has all the exquisite voluptuousness of youthful innocence.—There is not the slightest appearance of coquetry in it, no sentimental languor, no meretricious assumption of fondness to take her lover by surprize. She ought not to laugh, when she says, "I have forgot why I did call thee back," as if conscious of the artifice, nor hang in a fondling posture over the balcony. SHAKESPEAR has given a fine idea of the composure of the character, where he first describes her at the window, leaning her cheek upon her arm. The whole expression of her love should be [illegible] breath of flowers.

Mr. JONES's Mercutio was lively farce. Mr. CONWAY's Romeo, we cannot speak with patience. He bestrides the stage like a Colossus, throws his arms into the air like the sails of a windmill, and his motion is as unwieldy as that of a young elephant. His voice breaks in thunder on the ear like Gargantua's, but when he pleases to be soft, he is "the very beadle to an amorous sigh." Mr. COATES's absurdities are tame and trifling in comparison.—*Quere*, Why does he not marry?

MR. KEAN'S RICHARD.

Oct. 7, 1814.

We do not think Mr. Kean at all improved by his Irish expedition. As this is a point in which we feel a good deal of interest, both on Mr. Kean's account and our own, we shall state briefly our objections to some alterations in his mode of acting, which appear to us for the worse. His pauses are twice as long as they were, and the rapidity with which he hurries over other parts of the dialogue is twice as great as it was. In both these points, his style of acting always bordered on the very verge of extravagance; and we suspect it has at present passed the line. There are, no doubt, passages in which the pauses can hardly be too long, or too marked; —these must be, however, of rare occurrence, and it is in the finding out these exceptions to the general rule, and in daring to give them all their

effect, that the genius of an actor discovers itself. But the most common-place drawling monotony is not more mechanical or more offensive, than the converting these exceptions into a general rule, and making every sentence an alternation of dead pauses and rapid transitions*. It is not in extremes that dramatic genius is shewn, any more than skill in music consists in passing continually from the highest to the lowest note. The quickness of familiar utterance with which Mr. KEAN pronounced the anticipated doom of Stanley, "chop off his head," was quite ludicrous. Again, the manner in which, after his nephew said, "I fear no uncles dead," he suddenly turned round, and answered, "And I hope none living, sir," was, we thought, quite out of character. The motion was performed, and the sounds uttered, in the smallest possible time in which a puppet could be made to mimic or gabble the part. For this we see not the least reason; and can only account for it, from a

* An old gentleman, riding over Putney-bridge, turned round to his servant, and said, "Do you like eggs, John?" "Yes, sir." Here the conversation ended. The same gentleman riding over the same bridge that day year, again turned round, and said, "How?" "Poached, sir," was the answer.—This is the longest pause upon record, and has something of a dramatic effect, though it could not be transferred to the stage. Perhaps an actor might go so far, on the principle of indefinite pauses, as to begin a sentence in one act, and finish it in the next.

desire to give excessive effect by a display of the utmost dexterity of execution.

It is almost needless to observe, that executive power in acting, as in all other arts, is only valuable as it is made subservient to truth and nature. Even some want of mechanical skill is better than the perpetual affectation of shewing it. The absence of a quality is often less provoking than its abuse, because less voluntary.

The part which was least varied was the scene with Lady Anne. This is, indeed, nearly a perfect piece of acting. In leaning against the pillar at the commencement of the scene, Mr. KEAN did not go through exactly the same regular evolution of graceful attitudes, and we regretted the omission. He frequently varied the execution of many of his most striking conceptions, and the attempt in general failed, as it naturally must do. We refer particularly to his manner of resting on the point of his sword before he retires to his tent, to his treatment of the letter sent to Norfolk, and to his dying scene with Richmond.

Mr. KEAN'S *bye-play* is certainly one of his greatest excellences, and it might be said, that if SHAKESPEAR had written marginal directions to the players, in the manner of the German dramatists, he would often have directed them to do what Mr. KEAN does. Such additions to

the text are, however, to be considered as lucky hits, and it is not to be supposed that an actor is to provide an endless variety of these running accompaniments, which he is not in strictness bound to provide at all. In general, we think it a rule, that an actor ought to vary his part as little as possible, unless he is convinced that his former mode of playing it is erroneous. He should make up his mind as to the best mode of representing the part, and come as near to this standard as he can, in every successive exhibition. It is absurd to object to this mechanical uniformity as studied and artificial. All acting is studied or artificial. An actor is no more called upon to vary his gestures or articulation at every new rehearsal of the character, than an author can be required to furnish various readings to every separate copy of his work. To a new audience it is quite unnecessary; to those who have seen him before in the same part, it is worse than useless. They may at least be presumed to have come to a second representation, because they approved of the first, and will be sure to be disappointed in almost every alteration. The attempt is endless, and can only produce perplexity and indecision in the actor himself. He must either return perpetually in the same narrow round, or if he is determined to be always new, he may at last fancy that he ought to perform the part standing on his head instead of his

feet. Besides, Mr. KEAN's style of acting is not in the least of the unpremeditated, *improvisatori* kind: it is throughout elaborate and systematic, instead of being loose, off-hand, and accidental. He comes upon the stage as little unprepared as any actor we know. We object particularly to his varying the original action in the dying scene. He at first hold out his hands in a way which can only be conceived by those who saw him—in motionless despair,—or as if there were some preternatural power in the mere manifestation of his will:—he now actually fights with his doubled fists, after his sword is taken from him, like some helpless infant.

We have been quite satisfied with the attempts we have seen to ape Mr. KEAN in this part, without wishing to see him ape himself in it. There is no such thing as trick in matters of genius. All poetical licenses, however beautiful in themselves, by being parodied, instantly become ridiculous. It is because beauties of this kind have no clue to them, and are reducible to no standard, that it is the peculiar province of genius to detect them; by making them common, and reducing them to a rule, you make them perfectly mechanical, and perfectly absurd into the bargain.

To conclude our hypercritical remarks: we really think that Mr. KEAN was, in a great many instances, either too familiar, too empha-

tical, or too energetic. In the latter scenes, perhaps his energy could not be too great; but he gave the energy of action alone. He merely gesticulated, or at best vociferated the part. His articulation totally failed him. We doubt, if a single person in the house, not acquainted with the play, understood a single sentence that he uttered. It was "inexplicable dumb show and noise."—We wish to throw the fault of most of our objections on the managers. Their conduct has been marked by one uniform character, a paltry attention to their own immediate interest, a distrust of Mr. KEAN's abilities to perform more than the character he had succeeded in, and a contempt for the wishes of the public. They have spun him tediously out in every character, and have forced him to display the variety of his talents in the same, instead of different characters. They kept him back in Shylock, till he nearly failed in Richard from a cold. Why not bring him out in Macbeth, which was at one time got up for him? Why not bring him out at once in a variety of characters, as the Dublin managers have done? It does not appear that either they or he suffered by it. It seems, by all we can find, that versatility is, perhaps, Mr. KEAN's greatest excellence. Why then, not give him his range? Why tantalize the public? Why extort from them their last shilling for the twentieth repetition of the same part,

instead of letting them make their election for themselves, of what they like best? It is really very pitiful.

Ill as we conceive the London managers have treated him, the London audiences have treated him well, and we wish Mr. KEAN, for some years at least, to stick to them. They are his best friends; and he may assuredly account us, who have made these sorry remarks upon him, not among his worst. After he has got through the season here well, we see no reason why he should make himself hoarse with performing Hamlet at twelve o'clock, and Richard at six, at Kidderminster. At his time of life, and with his prospects, the improvement of his fortune is not the principal thing. A training under Captain BARCLAY would do more towards strengthening his mind and body, his fame and fortune, than sharing bumper receipts with the Dublin managers, or carousing with the whole Irish bar. Or, if Mr. KEAN does not approve of this rough regimen, he might devote the summer vacation to the Muses. To a man of genius, leisure is the first of benefits, as well as of luxuries; where, "with her best nurse, Contemplation," the mind

> "Can plume her feathers, and let grow her wings,
> "That in the various bustle of resort
> "Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impaired."

It was our first duty to point out Mr. KEAN'S excellences to the public, and we did so with no sparing hand; it is our second duty to him, to ourselves, and the public, to distinguish between his excellences and defects, and to prevent, if possible, his excellences from degenerating into defects.

MR. KEAN'S MACBETH.

Nov. 12, 1814.

THE genius of SHAKESPEAR was as much shewn in the subtlety and nice discrimination, as in the force and variety of his characters. The distinction is not preserved more completely in those which are the most opposite, than in those which in their general features and obvious appearance most nearly resemble each other. It has been observed, with very little exaggeration, that not one of his speeches could be put into the mouth of any other character than the one to which it is given, and that the transposition, if attempted, might be always detected from some circumstance in the passage itself. *If to invent according to nature*, be the true definition of genius, SHAKESPEAR had more of this quality than any other writer. He might be said to have been a joint-worker with Nature, and to have created an imaginary world of his own,

which has all the appearance and the truth of reality. His mind, while it exerted an absolute controul over the stronger workings of the passions, was exquisitely alive to the slightest impulses and most evanescent shades of character and feeling. The broad distinctions and governing principles of human nature are presented not in the abstract, but in their immediate and endless application to different persons and things. The local details, the particular accidents have the fidelity of history, without losing any thing of their general effect.

It is the business of poetry, and indeed of all works of imagination, to exhibit the species through the individual. Otherwise, there can be no opportunity for the exercise of the imagination, without which the descriptions of the painter or the poet are lifeless, unsubstantial, and vapid. If some modern critics are right, with their sweeping generalities and vague abstractions, SHAKESPEAR was quite wrong. In the French dramatists, only the class is represented, never the individual: their kings, their heroes, and their lovers are all the same, and they are all French—that is, they are nothing but the mouth-pieces of certain rhetorical common-place sentiments on the favourite topics of morality and the passions. The characters in SHAKESPEAR do not declaim like pedantic school-boys, but speak and act like men, placed in real circum-

stances, with "real hearts of flesh and blood beating in their bosoms." No two of his characters are the same, more than they would be so in nature. Those that are the most alike, are distinguished by positive differences, which accompany and modify the leading principle of the character through its most obscure ramifications, embodying the habits, gestures, and almost the looks of the individual. These touches of nature are often so many, and so minute, that the poet cannot be supposed to have been distinctly aware of the operation of the springs by which his imagination was set at work: yet every one of the results is brought out with a truth and clearness, as if his whole study had been directed to that peculiar trait of character, or subordinate train of feeling.

Thus Macbeth, and Richard the Third, King Henry the Sixth, and Richard the Second, —characters that, in their general description, and in common hands, would be merely repetitions of the same idea—are distinguished by traits as precise, though of course less violent, than those which separate Macbeth from Henry the Sixth, or Richard the Third from Richard the Second. SHAKESPEAR has, with wonderful accuracy, and without the smallest appearance of effort, varied the portraits of imbecility and effeminacy in the two deposed monarchs. With still more powerful and masterly strokes, he has

marked the different effects of ambition and cruelty, operating on different dispositions and in different circumstances, in his Macbeth and Richard the Third. Both are tyrants and usurpers, both violent and ambitious, both cruel and treacherous. But, Richard is cruel from nature and constitution. Macbeth becomes so from accidental circumstances. He is urged to the commission of guilt by golden opportunity, by the instigations of his wife, and by prophetic warnings. "Fate and metaphysical aid," conspire against his virtue and loyalty. Richard needs no prompter, but wades through a series of crimes to the height of his ambition, from ungovernable passions and the restless love of mischief. He is never gay but in the prospect, or in the success of his villanies: Macbeth is full of horror at the thoughts of the murder of Duncan, and of remorse after its perpetration. Richard has no mixture of humanity in his composition, no tie which binds him to the kind; he owns no fellowship with others, but is himself alone. Macbeth is not without feelings of sympathy, is accessible to pity, is even the dupe of his uxoriousness, and ranks the loss of friends and of his good name among the causes that have made him sick of life. He becomes more callous indeed as he plunges deeper in guilt, "direness is thus made familiar to his slaughterous thoughts," and he anticipates his

wife in the boldness and bloodiness of his enterprises, who, for want of the same stimulus of action, is "troubled with thick-coming fancies," walks in her sleep, goes mad, and dies. Macbeth endeavours to escape from reflection on his crimes, by repelling their consequences, and banishes remorse for the past, by meditating future mischief. This is not the principle of Richard's cruelty, which resembles the cold malignity of a fiend, rather than the frailty of human nature. Macbeth is goaded on by necessity; to Richard, blood is a pastime.—

There are other essential differences. Richard is a man of the world, a vulgar, plotting, hardened villain, wholly regardless of every thing but his own ends, and the means to accomplish them. Not so Macbeth. The superstitions of the time, the rude state of society, the local scenery and customs, all give a wildness and imaginary grandeur to his character. From the strangeness of the events which surround him, he is full of amazement and fear, and stands in doubt between the world of reality and the world of fancy. He sees sights not shewn to mortal eye, and hears unearthly music. All is tumult and disorder within and without his mind. In thought, he is absent and perplexed, desperate in act: his purposes recoil upon himself, are broken, and disjointed: he is the double thrall of his passions and his evil

destiny. He treads upon the brink of fate, and grows dizzy with his situation. Richard is not a character of imagination, but of pure will or passion. There is no conflict of opposite feelings in his breast. The apparitions which he sees are in his sleep, nor does he live like Macbeth, in a waking dream.

Such, at least, is our conception of the two characters, as drawn by SHAKESPEAR. Mr. KEAN does not distinguish them so completely as he might. His Richard comes nearer to the original than his Macbeth. He was deficient in the poetry of the character. He did not look like a man who had encountered the Weird Sisters. There should be nothing tight or compact in Macbeth, no tenseness of fibre, nor pointed decision of manner. He has, indeed, energy and manliness of soul, but " subject to all the skyey influences." He is sure of nothing. All is left at issue. He runs a-tilt with fortune, and is baffled with preternatural riddles. The agitation of his mind resembles the rolling of the sea in a storm; or, he is like a lion in the toils—fierce, impetuous, and ungovernable. In the fifth act in particular, which is in itself as busy and turbulent as possible, there was not that giddy whirl of the imagination—the character did not burnish out on all sides with those flashes of genius, of which Mr. KEAN had given so fine an earnest in the conclusion of his

Richard. The scene stood still—the parts might be perfect in themselves, but they were not joined together; they wanted vitality. The pauses in the speeches were too long—the actor seemed to be studying the part, rather than performing it—striving to make every word more emphatic than the last, and "lost too poorly" in himself," instead of being carried away with the grandeur of his subject. The text was not given accurately. Macbeth is represented in the play, arming before the castle, which adds to the interest of the scene.

In the delivery of the beautiful soliloquy, "My way of life is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf," Mr. KEAN was unsuccessful. That fine thoughtful melancholy did not seem to come over his mind, which characterises Mr. KEMBLE'S recitation of these lines. The very tone of Mr. KEMBLE'S voice has something retrospective in it—it is an echo of the past. Mr. KEAN in his dress was occasionally too much docked and curtailed for the gravity of the character. His movements were too agile and mercurial, and he fought more like a modern fencing-master than a Scottish chieftain of the eleventh century. He fell at last finely, with his face downwards, as if to cover the shame of his defeat. We recollect that Mr. COOKE discovered the great actor both in the death-scene in Macbeth, and in that

of Richard. He fell like the ruin of a state, like a king with his regalia about him.

The two finest things that Mr. KEAN has ever done, are his recitation of the passage in Othello, "Then, oh, farewell the tranquil mind," and the scene in Macbeth after the murder. The former was the highest and most perfect effort of his art. To enquire whether his manner in the latter scene was that of a king who commits a murder, or of a man who commits a murder to become a king, would be "to consider too curiously." But, as a lesson of common humanity, it was heart-rending. The hesitation, the bewildered look, the coming to himself, when he sees his hands bloody; the manner in which his voice clung to his throat, and choaked his utterance; his agony and tears, the force of nature overcome by passion—beggared description. It was a scene, which no one who saw it can ever efface from his recollection.

MR. KEAN'S ROMEO.

December, 1814.

Mr. Kean appeared at Drury-Lane in the character of Romeo, for the first time on Monday last. The house was crowded at an early hour, and neither those who went to admire, nor those who went to find fault, could go away disappointed. He discovered no new and unlooked-for excellences in the part, but displayed the same extraordinary energies which he never fails to do on every occasion. There is, indeed, a set of ingenious persons, who having perceived on Mr. Kean's first appearance, that he was a little man with an inharmonious voice, and no very great dignity or elegance of manner, go regularly to the theatre to confirm themselves in this singular piece of sagacity; and finding that the object of their contempt and wonder has not, since they last saw him, "added a cubit to his stature," —that his tones have not become "as musical

as is Apollo's lute," and that there is still an habitual want of grace about him, are determined, till such a metamorphosis is effected, not to allow a particle of genius to the actor, or of taste or common sense to those who are not stupidly blind to every thing but his defects. That an actor with very moderate abilities, having the advantages of voice, person and gracefulness of manner on his side, should acquire a very high reputation, is what we can understand, and have seen some instances of; but that an actor with almost every physical disadvantage against him, should, without very extraordinary powers and capacities indeed, be able to excite the most enthusiastic and general admiration, would, we conceive, be a phenomenon in the history of public imposture, totally without example. In fact, the generality of critics who undertake to give the tone to public opinion, have neither the courage nor discernment to decide on the merits of a truly excellent and original actor, and are equally without the candour to acknowledge their error, after they find themselves in the wrong.

In going to see Mr. KEAN in any new character, we do not go in the expectation of seeing either a perfect actor or perfect acting; because this is what we have not yet seen, either in him or in any one else. But we go to see (what he never disappoints us in) great spirit, ingenuity,

and originality given to the text in general, and an energy and depth of passion given to certain scenes and passages, which we should in vain look for from any other actor on the stage. In every character that he has played, in Shylock, in Richard, in Hamlet, in Othello, in Iago, in Luke, and in Macbeth, there has been either a dazzling repetition of master-strokes of art and nature, or if at any time (from a want of physical adaptation, or sometimes of just conception of the character) the interest has flagged for a considerable interval, the deficiency has always been redeemed by some collected and overpowering display of energy or pathos, which electrified at the moment, and left a lasting impression on the mind afterwards. Such, for instance, were the murder-scene in Macbeth, the third act of his Othello, the interview with Ophelia in Hamlet, and, lastly, the scene with Friar Lawrence, and the death-scene in Romeo.

Of the characters that Mr. KEAN has played, Hamlet and Romeo are the most like one another, at least in adventitious circumstances; those to which Mr. KEAN'S powers are least adapted, and in which he has failed most in general truth of conception and continued interest. There is in both characters the same strong tincture of youthful enthusiasm, of tender melancholy, of romantic thought and sentiment; but we confess we did not see these qualities in Mr. KEAN'S

performance of either. His Romeo had nothing of the lover in it. We never saw any thing less ardent or less voluptuous. In the Balcony-scene in particular, he was cold, tame, and unimpressive. It was said of GARRICK and BARRY in this scene, that the one acted it as if he would jump up to the lady, and the other as if he would make the lady jump down to him. Mr. KEAN produced neither of these effects. He stood like a statue of lead. Even Mr. CONWAY might feel taller on the occasion, and Mr. COATES wonder at the taste of the public. The only time in this scene when he attempted to give any thing like an effect, was when he smiled on over-hearing Juliet's confession of her passion. But the smile was less like that of a fortunate lover who unexpectedly hears his happiness confirmed, than of a discarded lover, who hears of the disappointment of a rival.—The whole of this part not only wanted "the silver sound of lovers' tongues by night" to recommend it, but warmth, tenderness, —every thing which it should have possessed. Mr. KEAN was like a man waiting to receive a message from his mistress through her confidante, not like one who was pouring out his rapturous vows to the idol of his soul. There was neither glowing animation, nor melting softness in his manner; his cheek was not flushed, no sigh breathed involuntary from his overcharged bosom: all was forced and lifeless. His acting

sometimes reminded us of the scene with Lady Anne, and we cannot say a worse thing of it, considering the difference of the two characters. Mr. KEAN's imagination appears not to have the principles of joy, or hope, or love in it. He seems chiefly sensible to pain, or to the passions that spring from it, and to the terrible energies of mind or body, which are necessary to grapple with, or to avert it. Even over the world of passion he holds but a divided sway: he either does not feel, or seldom expresses, deep, sustained, internal sentiment,—there is no repose in his mind: no feeling seems to take full possession of it, that is not linked to action, and but does not goad him on to the phrenzy of despair. Or if he ever conveys the sublimer pathos of thought and feeling, it is after the storm of passion, to which he has been worked up, has subsided. The tide of feeling then at times rolls deep, majestic, and awful, like the surging sea after a tempest, now lifted to Heaven, now laying bare the bosom of the deep. Thus after the violence and anguish of the scene with Iago, in the third act of Othello, his voice in the farewell apostrophe to Content, took the deep intonation of the pealing organ, and heaved from the heart sounds that came on the ear like the funeral dirge of years of promised happiness. So in the midst of the extravagant and irresistible expression of Romeo's grief, at being ba-

nished from the object of his love, his voice suddenly stops, and faulters, and is choaked with sobs of tenderness, when he comes to Juliet's name. Those persons must be made of sterner stuff than ourselves, who are proof against Mr. KEAN'S acting, both in this scene, and in his dying convulsion at the close of the play. But in the fine soliloquy beginning, "What said my man, when my betossed soul, &c."—and at the tomb afterwards—"Here will I set up my everlasting rest, and shake the yoke of inauspicious stars from this world-wearied flesh,"—in these, where the sentiment is subdued and profound, and the passion is lost in calm, fixed despair, Mr. KEAN's acting was comparatively ineffectual. There was nothing in his manner of delivering this last exquisitely beautiful speech, which echoed to the still sad music of humanity, which recalled past hopes, or reposed on the dim shadowings of futurity.

Mr. KEAN affects the audience from the force of passion instead of sentiment, or sinks into pathos from the violence of action, but seldom rises into it from the power of thought and feeling. In this respect, he presents almost a direct contrast to Miss O'NEILL. Her energy always arises out of her sensibility. Distress takes possession of, and overcomes her faculties; she triumphs in her weakness, and vanquishes by yielding. Mr. KEAN is greatest in the con-

flict of passion, and resistance to his fate, in the opposition of his will, in the keen excitement of his understanding. His Romeo is, in the best scenes, very superior to Miss O'NEILL's Juliet; but it is with some difficulty, and after some reflection, that we should say that the finest parts of his acting are superior to the finest parts of her's;—to her parting with Jaffier in Belvidera, —to her terror and her joy in meeting with Biron, in Isabella,—to the death-scene in the same character, and to the scene in the prison with her husband as Mrs. Beverley. Her acting is undoubtedly more correct, equable, and faultless throughout than Mr. KEAN's, and it is quite as affecting at the time, in the most impassioned parts. But it does not leave the same impression on the mind afterwards. It adds little to the stock of our ideas, or to our materials for reflection, but passes away with the momentary illusion of the scene. And this difference of effect, perhaps, arises from the difference of the parts they have to sustain on the stage. In the female characters which Miss O'NEILL plays, the distress is in a great measure physical and natural: that is,—such as is common to every sensible woman in similar circumstances. She abandons herself to every impulse of grief or tenderness, and revels in the excess of an uncontroulable affliction. She can call to her aid,

with perfect propriety and effect, all the weaknesses of her sex,—tears, sighs, convulsive sobs, shrieks, death-like stupefaction, and laughter more terrible than all. But it is not the same in the parts in which Mr. KEAN has to act. There must here be a manly fortitude, as well as a natural sensibility. There must be a restraint constantly put upon the feelings by the understanding and the will. He must be "as one, in suffering all, who suffers nothing." He cannot give way entirely to his situation or his feelings, but must endeavour to become master of them, and of himself. This, in our conception, must make it more easy to give entire effect and interest to female characters on the stage, by rendering the expression of passion more obvious, simple, and natural; and must also make them less rememberable afterwards, by leaving less scope for the exercise of intellect, and for the distinct and complicated reaction of the character upon circumstances. At least, we can only account in some such way for the different impressions which the acting of these two admired performers makes on our mind, when we see, or when we think of them. As critics, we particularly feel this. Mr. KEAN affords a never-failing source of observation and discussion; we can only *praise* Miss O'NEILL.—The peculiarity and the strong hold of Mrs. SIDDONS' acting was, that

she, in a wonderful manner, united both the extremes of acting here spoken of,—that is, all the frailties of passion, with all the strength and resources of the intellect.

MR. KEAN'S IAGO.

July 23, 1814.

We regretted some time ago, that we could only get a casual glimpse of Mr. Kean in the character of Iago; we have since been more fortunate, and we certainly think his performance of the part one of the most extraordinary exhibitions on the stage. There is no one within our remembrance, who has so completely foiled the critics as this celebrated actor: one sagacious person imagines that he must perform a part in a certain manner; another virtuoso chalks out a different path for him; and when the time comes, he does the whole off in a way, that neither of them had the least conception of, and which both of them are therefore very ready to condemn as entirely wrong. It was ever the trick of genius to be thus. We confess that Mr. Kean has thrown us out more than once. For instance, we are very much inclined to persist in the objec-

tion we before made, that his Richard is not gay enough, and that his Iago is not grave enough. This he may perhaps conceive to be the mere caprice of captious criticism; but we will try to give our reasons, and shall leave them to Mr. KEAN's better judgment.

It is to be remembered, then, that Richard was a princely villain, borne along in a sort of triumphal car of royal state, buoyed up with the hopes and privileges of his birth, reposing even on the sanctity of religion, trampling on his devoted victims without remorse, and who looked out and laughed from the high watch-tower of his confidence and his expectations, on the desolation and misery he had caused around him. He held on his way, unquestioned, "hedged in with the divinity of kings," amenable to no tribunal, and abusing his power *in contempt of mankind.* But as for Iago, we conceive differently of him. He had not the same natural advantages. He was a mere adventurer in mischief, a pains-taking, plodding knave, without patent or pedigree, who was obliged to work his up-hill way by wit, not by will, and to be the founder of his own fortune. He was, if we may be allowed a vulgar allusion, a true prototype of modern Jacobinism, who thought that talents ought to decide the place; a man of "morbid sensibility" (in the fashionable phrase), full of distrust, of hatred, of

anxious and corroding thoughts, and who, though he might assume a temporary superiority over others by superior adroitness, and pride himself in his skill, could not be supposed to assume it as a matter of course, as if he had been entitled to it from his birth.

We do not here mean to enter into the characters of the two men, but something must be allowed to the difference of their situations. There might be the same indifference in both as to the end in view, but there could not well be the same security as to the success of the means. Iago had to pass through a different ordeal; he had no appliances and means to boot; no royal road to the completion of his tragedy. His pretensions were not backed by authority; they were not baptized at the font; they were not holy-water proof. He had the whole to answer for in his own person, and could not shift the responsibility to the heads of others. Mr. KEAN'S Richard was therefore, we think, deficient in something of that regal jollity and reeling triumph of success which the part would bear: but this we can easily account for, because it is the traditional common-place idea of the character, that he is to "play the dog—to bite and snarl."—The extreme unconcern and laboured levity of his Iago, on the contrary, is a refinement and original device of the actor's own mind, and deserves a distinct consideration. The cha-

racter of Iago, in fact, belongs to a class of characters common to SHAKESPEAR, and at the same time peculiar to him, namely, that of great intellectual activity, accompanied with a total want of moral principle, and therefore displaying itself at the constant expence of others, making use of reason as a pander to will —employing its ingenuity and its resources to palliate its own crimes, and aggravate the faults of others, and seeking to confound the practical distinctions of right and wrong, by referring them to some overstrained standard of speculative refinement.

Some persons more nice than wise, have thought the whole of the character of Iago unnatural. SHAKESPEAR, who was quite as good a philosopher as he was a poet, thought otherwise. He knew that the love of power, which is another name for the love of mischief, was natural to man. He would know this as well or better than if it had been demonstrated to him by a logical diagram, merely from seeing children paddle in the dirt, or kill flies for sport. We might ask those who think the character of Iago not natural, why they go to see it performed—but from the interest it excites, the sharper edge which it sets on their curiosity and imagination? Why do we go to see tragedies in general? Why do we always read the accounts in the newspapers, of dreadful fires

and shocking murders, but for the same reason? Why do so many persons frequent executions and trials; or why do the lower classes almost universally take delight in barbarous sports and cruelty to animals, but because there is a natural tendency in the mind to strong excitement, a desire to have its faculties roused and stimulated to the utmost? Whenever this principle is not under the restraint of humanity or the sense of moral obligation, there are no excesses to which it will not of itself give rise, without the assistance of any other motive, either of passion or self-interest. Iago is only an extreme instance of the kind; that is, of diseased intellectual activity, with an almost perfect indifference to moral good or evil, or rather with a preference of the latter, because it falls more in with his favourite propensity, gives greater zest to his thoughts and scope to his actions. Be it observed, too, (for the sake of those who are for squaring all human actions by the maxims of Rochefoucault), that he is quite or nearly as indifferent to his own fate as to that of others; that he runs all risks for a trifling and doubtful advantage; and is himself the dupe and victim of his ruling passion—an incorrigible love of mischief—an insatiable craving after action of the most difficult and dangerous kind. Our Ancient is a philosopher, who fancies that a lie that kills, has more point

in it than an alliteration or an antithesis; who thinks a fatal experiment on the peace of a family a better thing than watching the palpitations in the heart of a flea in an air-pump; who plots the ruin of his friends as an exercise for his understanding, and stabs men in the dark to prevent *ennui*. Now this, though it be sport, yet it is dreadful sport. There is no room for trifling and indifference, nor scarcely for the appearance of it; the very object of his whole plot is to keep his faculties stretched on the rack, in a state of watch and ward, in a sort of breathless suspense, without a moment's interval of repose. He has a desperate stake to play for, like a man who fences with poisoned weapons, and has business enough on his hands to call for the whole stock of his sober circumspection, his dark duplicity, and insidious gravity. He resembles a man who sits down to play at chess, for the sake of the difficulty and complication of the game, and who immediately becomes absorbed in it. His amusements, if they are amusements, are severe and saturnine—even his wit blisters. His gaiety arises from the success of his treachery; his ease from the sense of the torture he has inflicted on others. Even if other circumstances permitted it, the part he has to play with Othello requires that he should assume the most serious concern, and something of the plausibility of a confessor

"His cue is villanous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam." He is repeatedly called "honest Iago," which looks as if there were something suspicious in his appearance, which admitted a different construction. The tone which he adopts in the scenes with Roderigo, Desdemona, and Cassio, is only a relaxation from the more arduous business of the play. Yet there is in all his conversation, an inveterate misanthropy, a licentious keenness of perception, which is always sagacious of evil, and snuffs up the tainted scent of its quarry with rancorous delight. An exuberance of spleen is the essence of the character. The view which we have here taken of the subject, (if at all correct) will not therefore justify the extreme alteration which Mr. KEAN has introduced into the part.

Actors in general have been struck only with the wickedness of the character, and have exhibited an assassin going to the place of execution. Mr. KEAN has abstracted the wit of the character, and makes Iago appear throughout an excellent good fellow, and lively bottle-companion. But though we do not wish him to be represented as a monster, or a fiend, we see no reason why he should instantly be converted into a pattern of comic gaiety and good humour. The light which illumines the character, should rather resemble the flashes of lightning in the

mirky sky, which make the darkness more terrible. Mr. KEAN's Iago is, we suspect, too much in the sun. His manner of acting the part would have suited better with the character of Edmund in King Lear, who, though in other respects much the same, has a spice of gallantry in his constitution, and has the favour and countenance of the ladies, which always gives a man the smug appearance of a bridegroom!—We shall in another article, illustrate these remarks by a reference to some passages in the text itself.

MR. KEAN'S IAGO.

(Concluded).

The general groundwork of the character of Iago, as it appears to us, is not absolute malignity, but a want of moral principle, or an indifference to the real consequences of the actions, which the meddling perversity of his disposition and love of immediate excitement lead him to commit. He is an amateur of tragedy in real life; and instead of exercising his ingenuity on imaginary characters, or forgotten incidents, he takes the bolder and more desperate course of getting up his plot at home, casts the principal parts among his nearest friends and connections, and rehearses it in downright earnest, with steady nerves and unabated resolution. The character is a complete abstraction of the intellectual from the moral being; or, in other words, consists in an absorption of every common feeling in the virulence of his under-

standing, the deliberate wilfulness of his purposes, and in his restless, untameable love of mischievous contrivance. We proceed to quote some particular passages in support of this opinion.

In the general dialogue and reflections, which are an accompaniment to the progress of the catastrophe, there is a constant overflowing of gall and bitterness. The acuteness of his malice fastens upon every thing alike, and pursues the most distant analogies of evil with a provoking sagacity. He by no means forms an exception to his own rule:—

> "Who has that breast so pure,
> "But some uncleanly apprehensions
> "Keep leets and law-days, and in sessions sit
> "With meditations lawful?"

His mirth is not natural and cheerful, but forced and extravagant, partaking of the intense activity of mind and cynical contempt of others in which it originates. Iago is not, like Candide, a believer in optimism, but seems to have a thorough hatred or distrust of every thing of the kind, and to dwell with gloating satisfaction on whatever can interrupt the enjoyment of others, and gratify his moody irritability. One of his most characteristic speeches is that immediately after the marriage of Othello:—

> "*Roderigo.* What a full fortune does the thick-lips owe,
> "If he can carry her thus?

" *Iago.* Call up her father:
" Rouse him [*Othello*], make after him, poison his delight,
" Proclaim him in the streets, incense her kinsmen,
" And tho' he in a fertile climate dwell,
" Plague him with flies: tho' that his joy be joy,
" Yet throw such changes of vexation on't,
" As it may lose some colour."

The perthacious logical following up of his favourite principle in this passage, is admirable. In the next, his imagination runs riot in the mischief he is plotting, and breaks out into the wildness and impetuosity of real enthusiasm :—

" *Roderigo.* Here is her father's house, I'll call aloud.
" *Iago.* Do, with like timorous accent and dire yell,
" As when, by night and negligence, the fire
" Is spied in populous cities."

There is nothing here of the trim levity and epigrammatic conciseness of Mr. KEAN's manner of acting the part; which is no less paradoxical than Mrs. GREVILLE's celebrated Ode to Indifference. Iago was a man of genius, and not a *petit maitre.* One of his most frequent topics, on which he is rich indeed, and in descanting on which, his spleen serves him for a muse, is the disproportionate match between Desdemona and the Moor. This is brought forward in the first scene, and is never lost sight of afterwards.

" *Brabantio.* What is the reason of this terrible summons?
" *Iago.* Sir, you're robb'd; for shame, put on your gown;

" Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul:
——————————" Arise, arise,
" Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,
" Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.
" Arise, I say."—[*And so on to the end of the passage*].

Now, all this goes on springs well oiled: Mr. KEAN'S mode of giving the passage had the tightness of a drumhead, and was muffled (perhaps purposely so) into the bargain.

This is a clue to the character of the lady which Iago is not at all ready to part with. He recurs to it again in the second act, when in answer to his insinuations against Desdemona, Roderigo says,—

" I cannot believe that in her—she's full of most bless'd conditions."

" *Iago.* Bless'd fig's end. The wine she drinks is made of grapes. If she had been bless'd, she would never have loved the Moor."

And again, with still more effect and spirit afterwards, when he takes advantage of this very suggestion arising in Othello's own breast;—

" *Othello.* And yet how nature erring from itself—
" *Iago.* Aye, there's the point;—as, to be bold with you,
" Not to affect many proposed matches,
" Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,
" Whereto we see in all things, Nature tends;
" Foh! one may smell in such, a will most rank,
" Foul disproportions, thoughts unnatural."

This is probing to the quick. "Our Ancient" here turns the character of poor Desdemona, as it were, inside out. It is certain that nothing but the genius of SHAKESPEAR could have preserved the entire interest and delicacy of the part, and have even drawn an additional elegance and dignity from the peculiar circumstances in which she is placed. The character indeed has always had the greatest charm for minds of the finest sensibility.

For our own part, we are a little of Iago's council in this matter; and all circumstances considered, and platonics out of the question, if we were to cast the complexion of Desdemona physiognomically, we should say that she had a very fair skin, and very light auburn hair, inclining to yellow! We at the same time give her infinite credit for purity and delicacy of sentiment; but it so happens that purity and grossness sometimes

——————————"nearly are allied,
"And thin partitions do their bounds divide."

Yet the reverse does not hold; so uncertain and undefinable a thing is moral character! It is no wonder that Iago had some contempt for it, "who knew all quantities of human dealings, with a learned spirit." There is considerable gaiety and ease in his dialogue with Emilia and Desdemona on their landing. It is then holiday

time with him; but yet the general satire will be acknowledged (at least by one half of our readers) to be biting enough, and his idea of his own character is finely expressed in what he says to Desdemona, when she asks him how he would praise her—

> "Oh gentle lady, do not put me to it,
> "For I am nothing, if not critical."

Mr. KEAN'S execution of this part we thought admirable; but he was quite as much at his ease in every other part of the play, which was done (we know not why) in a single key.

The habitual licentiousness of Iago's conversation is not to be traced to the pleasure he takes in gross or lascivious images, but to a desire of finding out the worst side of every thing, and of proving himself an over-match for appearances. He has none of "the milk of human kindness" in his composition. His imagination refuses every thing that has not a strong infusion of the most unpalatable ingredients, and his moral constitution digests only poisons. Virtue, or goodness, or whatever has the least "relish of salvation in it," is, to his depraved appetite, sickly and insipid; and he even resents the good opinion entertained of his own integrity, as if it were an affront cast on the masculine sense and spirit of his character. Thus, at the meeting between Othello and Des-

demona, he exclaims—"Oh, you are well tuned now: but I'll set down the pegs that make this music, *as honest as I am*"—deriving an indirect triumph over the want of penetration in others from the consciousness of his own villainy.

In most of the passages which we have hitherto quoted, Iago gives a loose to his passion for theoretical evil: in the scenes with Othello, where he has to put his theory in practice, with great risk to himself, and with dreadful consequences to others, he is proportionably guarded, insidious, dark and deliberate. In the very first scene with Othello, he takes a very different tone;—that tone of hypocritical virtue and affected delicacy, which always betrays the want of the reality.

"*Enter Othello, Iago, and Attendants.*

"*Iago.* Though in the trade of war I have slain men,
"Yet do I hold it very stuff o' th' conscience,
"To do no contriv'd murder. I lack iniquity
"Sometimes to do me service. Nine or ten times
"I thought to have jerk'd him here under the ribs.
"*Othello.* 'Tis better as it is.
"*Iago.* Nay, but he prated,
"And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms
"Against your honour, that with the little godliness I have
"I did full hard forbear him."

But the part in which, according to our conception, Mr. KEAN failed most, was in the third

act with Othello, where "comes the tug of war." The following passage is, we think, decisive to our purpose :—

"*Iago.* My noble lord.
"*Othello.* What dost thou say, Iago?
"*Iago.* Did Michael Cassio,
" When you woo'd my lady, know of your love?
"*Othello.* He did from first to last.
" Why dost thou ask?
"*Iago.* But for a satisfaction of my thought,
" No further harm.
"*Othello.* Why of thy thought, Iago?
"*Iago.* I did not think he had been acquainted with it.
"*Othello.* O yes, and went between us very oft—
"*Iago.* Indeed!
"*Othello.* Indeed! Ay, indeed. Discern'st thou aught
" of that?
" he not honest?
"*Iago.* Honest, my Lord?
"*Othello.* Honest? Ay, honest.
"*Iago.* My Lord, for aught I know.
"*Othello.* What dost thou think?
"*Iago.* Think, my Lord!
"*Othello.* Think, my Lord! Alas, thou echo'st me,
" As if there were some monster in thy thought
" Too hideous to be shewn. Thou dost mean something:
" I heard thee say even now, thou lik'dst not that—
" When Cassio left my wife. What did'st not like?
" And when I told thee, he was of my counsel,
" Of my whole course of wooing; thou criedst, indeed!
" And didst contract and purse thy brow together,
" As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain
" Some horrible conceit: If thou dost love me,
" Shew me thy thought.

" *Iago*: My Lord, you know I love you.
" *Othello*. I think thou dost:
" And for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty,
" And weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st them breath,
" Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more:
" For such things in a false disloyal knave
" Are tricks of custom: but in a man that's just,
" They're cold dilations working from the heart,
" Which passion cannot rule."

Now, if there is any thing of superficial gaiety or heedlessness in this, " it is not written in the bond:"—the breaks and stops, the pursing and knitting of the brow together, the deep internal working of hypocrisy under the mask of love and honesty, escaped us on the stage.—The same observation applies to what he says afterwards of himself:—

" Though I perchance am vicious in my guess,
" As I confess it is my nature's plague
" To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy
" Shapes faults that are not."

The candour of this confession would hardly be extorted from him, if it did not correspond with the moody dissatisfaction, and suspicious, creeping, cat-like watchfulness of his general appearance. The anxious suspense, the deep artifice, the collected earnestness, and, if we may so say, the *passion* of hypocrisy, are decidedly marked in every line of the whole scene, and are worked up to a sort of paroxysm after-

wards, in that inimitably characteristic apostrophe:—

" O Grace! O Heaven forgive me!
" Are you a man? Have you a soul or sense?
" God be wi' you: take mine office. O wretched fool
" That lov'st to make thine honesty a vice!
" Oh monstrous world! take note, take note, O world!
" To be direct and honest, is not safe.
" I thank you for this profit, and from hence
" I'll love no friend, since love breeds such offence."

This burst of hypocritical indignation might well have called forth all Mr. KEAN'S powers, but it did not. We might multiply passages of the same kind, if we had time.

The philosophy of the character is strikingly unfolded in the part where Iago gets the handkerchief:—

———————— " This may do something.
" The Moor already changes with my poisons,
" Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,
" But with a little act upon the blood,
" Burn like the mines of sulphur."

We here find him watching the success of his experiment, with the sanguine anticipation of an alchemist at the moment of projection.

———————— " I did say so:
" Look where he comes"—[*Enter Othello*]—" Not poppy
" nor mandragora,
" Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,

" Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
" Which thou ow'dst yesterday."

Again he says:—

——————————" Work on:
" My medicine works; thus credulous fools are caught,
" And many worthy and chaste dames even thus
" All guiltless meet reproach."

So that after all, he would persuade us that his object is only to give an instructive example of the injustice that prevails in the world.

If he is bad enough when he has business on his hands, he is still worse when his purposes are suspended, and he has only to reflect on the misery he has occasioned. His indifference when Othello falls in a trance, is perfectly diabolical, but perfectly in character:—

" *Iago.* How is it, General? Have you not hurt your
" head?
" *Othello.* Dost thou mock me?
" *Iago.* I mock you not, by heaven," &c.

The callous levity which Mr. KEAN seems to consider as belonging to the character in general, is proper here, because Iago has no feelings connected with humanity; but he has other feelings and other passions of his own, which are not to be trifled with.

We do not, however, approve of Mr. KEAN's pointing to the dead bodies after the catastrophe.

It is not in the character of the part, which consists in the love of mischief, not as an end, but as a means, and when that end is attained, though he may feel no remorse, he would feel no triumph. Besides, it is not the text of SHAKESPEAR. Iago does not point to the bed, but Ludovico bids him look at it:—"Look on the tragic loading of this bed," &c.

We have already noticed that Edmund the Bastard is like an episode of the same character, placed in less difficult circumstances. Zanga is a vulgar caricature of it.

MR. KEAN'S RICHARD II.

March 16, 1815.

We are not in the number of those who are anxious in recommending the getting-up of Shakespear's plays in general, as a duty which our stage-managers owe equally to the author, and the reader of those wonderful compositions. The representing the very finest of them on the stage, even by the best actors, is, we apprehend, an abuse of the genius of the poet, and even in those of a second-rate class, the quantity of sentiment and imagery greatly outweighs the immediate impression of the situation and story. Not only are the more refined poetical beauties and minuter strokes of character lost to the audience, but the most striking and impressive passages, those which having once read we can never forget, fail comparatively of their effect, except in one or two rare instances indeed. It is only the *pantomime* part of tragedy, the ex-

hibition of immediate and physical distress, that which gives the greatest opportunity for "inexpressible dumb-show and noise," which is sure to tell, and tell completely on the stage. All the rest, all that appeals to our profounder feelings, to reflection and imagination, all that affects us most deeply in our closets, and in fact constitutes the glory of SHAKESPEAR, is little else than an interruption and a drag on the business of the stage. *Segnius per aures demissa*, &c. Those parts of the play on [redacted] reader dwells the longest, and [redacted] relish in the perusal, are hurri[redacted] performance, while the most [redacted] tionable are obtruded on his no[redacted]py as much time as the most impo[redacted] do not mean to say that there is less knowledge or display of mere stage-effect in SHAKESPEAR than in other writers, but that there is a much greater knowledge and display of other things, which divide the attention with it, and to which it is not possible to give an equal force in the representation. Hence it is, that the reader of the plays of SHAKESPEAR is almost always disappointed in seeing them acted; and, for our own parts, we should never go to see them acted, if we could help it.

SHAKESPEAR has embodied his characters so very distinctly, that he stands in no need of the actor's assistance to make them more distinct;

and the representation of the character on the stage almost uniformly interferes with our conception of the character itself. The only exceptions we can recollect to this observation, are Mrs. SIDDONS and Mr. KEAN—the former of whom in one or two characters, and the latter, not certainly in any one character, but in very many passages, have raised our imagination of the part they acted. It may be asked then, why all great actors chuse characters from SHAKE- [redacted] me out in; and again, why these be- [redacted] rite parts? First, it is not that t[redacted] exhibit their author, but that h[redacted] shew themselves off. The on[redacted] which SHAKESPEAR appears to gre[redacted] advantage on the stage than common writers is, that he stimulates the faculties of the actor more. If he is a sensible man, he perceives how much he has to do, the inequalities he has to contend with, and he exerts himself accordingly; he puts himself at full speed, and lays all his resources under contribution; he attempts more, and makes a greater number of brilliant failures; he plays off all the tricks of his art to mimic the poet; he does all he can, and bad is often the best. We have before said that there are some few exceptions. If the genius of SHAKESPEAR does not shine out undiminished in the actor, we perceive certain effects and refractions of it in him. If the oracle does not speak

quite intelligibly, yet we perceive that the priest at the altar is inspired with the god, or possessed with a demon. To speak our minds at once, we believe that in acting SHAKESPEAR there is a greater number of good things marred than in acting any other author. In fact, in going to see the plays of SHAKESPEAR, it would be ridiculous to suppose, that any one ever went to see Hamlet or Othello represented by KEAN or KEMBLE; we go to see KEAN or KEMBLE in Hamlet or Othello. On the contrary, Miss O'NEILL and Mrs. Beverley are, we take it, one and the same person. As to the second point, viz. that SHAKESPEAR'S characters are decidedly favourites on the stage in the same proportion as they are in the closet, we deny it altogether. They either do not tell so much, or very little more than many others. Mrs. SIDDONS was quite as great in Mrs. Beverley and Isabella as in Lady Macbeth or Queen Katherine: yet no one, we apprehend, will say that the poetry is equal. It appears, therefore, not that the most intellectual characters excite most interest on the stage, but that they are objects of greater curiosity; they are nicer tests of the skill of the actor, and afford greater scope for controversy, how far the sentiment is "overdone or come tardy of." There is more in this circumstance than people in general are aware of. We have no hesitation in saying, for instance, that Miss

O'NEILL has more popularity *in the house* than Mr. KEAN. It is quite as certain, that he is more thought of *out of it*. The reason is, that she is not "food for the critics," whereas Mr. KEAN notoriously is; there is no end of the topics he affords for discussion—for praise and blame.

All that we have said of acting in general applies to his Richard II. It has been supposed that this is his finest part: this is, however, a total misrepresentation. There are only one or two electrical shocks given in it; and in many of his characters he gives a much greater number.—The excellence of his acting is in proportion to the number of hits, for he has not equal truth or purity of style. Richard II. was hardly given correctly as to the general outline. Mr. KEAN made it a character of *passion*, that is, of feeling combined with energy; whereas it is a character of *pathos*, that is to say, of feeling combined with weakness. This, we conceive, is the general fault of Mr. KEAN's acting, that it is always energetic or nothing. He is always on full stretch—never relaxed. He expresses all the violence, the extravagance, and fierceness of the passions, but not their misgivings, their helplessness, and sinkings into despair. He has too much of that strong nerve and fibre that is always equally elastic. We might instance to the present purpose, his dashing the glass down

with all his might, in the scene with Hereford, instead of letting it fall out of his hands, as from an infant's; also, his manner of expostulating with Bolingbroke, "Why on thy knee, thus low, &c." which was altogether fierce and heroic, instead of being sad, thoughtful, and melancholy. If Mr. KEAN would look into some passages in this play, into that in particular, "Oh that I were a mockery king of snow, to melt away before the sun of Bolingbroke," he would find a clue to this character, and to human nature in general, which he seems to have missed—how far feeling is connected with the sense of weakness as well as of strength, or the power of humility, and the force of passiveness.

We never saw Mr. KEAN look better than when we saw him in Richard II. and his voice appeared to us to be stronger. We saw him near, which is always in his favour; and we think one reason why the Editor of this Paper* was disappointed in first seeing this celebrated actor, was his being at a considerable distance from the stage. We feel persuaded that on a nearer and more frequent view of him, he will agree that he is a perfectly original, and sometimes a perfectly natural actor; that if his conception is not always just or profound, his execution is masterly; that where he is not the

* The Examiner.

very character he assumes, he makes a most brilliant rehearsal of it; that he never wants energy, ingenuity, and animation, though he is often deficient in dignity, grace, and tenderness; that if he frequently disappoints us in those parts where we expect him to do most, he as frequently surprises us by striking out unexpected beauties of his own; and that the objectionable parts of his acting arise chiefly from the physical impediments he has to overcome.

Of the other characters of the play, it is needless to say much. Mr. POPE was respectable in John of Gaunt. Mr. HOLLAND was lamentable in the Duke of York, and Mr. ELLISTON indifferent in Bolingbroke. This alteration of Richard II. is the best that has been attempted; for it consists entirely of omissions, except one or two scenes which are idly tacked on to the conclusion.

THE UNKNOWN GUEST.

March 29, 1815.

The English Drama has made an acquisition of no less than three new pieces in the course of the week. The Unknown Guest (said to be from the pen of Mr. Arnold, the Manager) is, we suppose, to be considered as a dramatic trifle: it is one of the longest and dullest trifles we almost ever remember to have sat out. We think in general, that the practice of making the Manager bring out his own pieces on the stage, is a custom which would be "more honoured in the breach than the observance:" it is offering a premium for the rejection of better pieces than his own. In the present instance, it would be a compliment to say, that the author has failed in wit, character, incident, or sentiment; for he has not attempted any thing of the kind. The dialogue bears no proportion in quantity to the songs; and chiefly serves as a

vehicle to tack together a certain number of unmeaning lines, arranged for different voices, and set in our opinion to very indifferent music. The music of this Opera professes to be by Mr. KELLY and Mr. BRAHAM, except that of one song, which is modestly said to be—selected;—a title which we apprehend might be extended to the whole. We do not recollect a single movement in the airs composed by Mr. KELLY, which was not familiar even to vulgarity; and the style of Mr. BRAHAM'S songs has no other object than to pamper him in his peculiar vices, and to produce that *mannerism*, which is the destruction of all excellence in art. There are two or three favourite passages which seem to dwell upon his ear, and to which he gives a striking expression; these he combines and repeats with laborious foolery; and in fact, sings nothing but himself over and over continually. Nothing can be worse than this affected and selfish monotony. Instead of acquiring new and varied resources, by lending his imagination to the infinite combinations of which music is susceptible, and by fairly entering into his subject, all his ideas of excellence are taken from, and confined to the sound of his own voice. It is on this account that we listen to Mr. BRAHAM'S singing with less pleasure than we formerly did. It is not assuredly that Mr. BRAHAM has fallen off in his singing; on the contrary, he has

improved and perfected his particular talent, but we constantly know what we have to expect, or rather to apprehend, for this anticipation at last amounts to apprehension: we perceive a limit, and this perception is always painful, where it seems to arise from any thing wilful or systematic. Those who first hear Mr. Braham, are struck with a noble simplicity and fervour in his manner of expressing certain emotions, in the eagerness with which he seems to fling himself into his subject, disdaining the rules of art, like the combatant who rushes without his armour to the battle: the sounds he utters, appear to rend his own bosom, or at other times, linger in fluttering accents on his lips. The communication between the voice and the feelings is immediate, instantaneous, irresistible; and the language of music seems the language of nature and passion. But when the sound becomes not only an echo to the sense, but to itself—when the same alternation of bursts of heroic passion, and thrillings of sentimental tenderness is constantly played off upon us—when there is nothing but this trite transition from the *con furio*, *con strepito*, to the *affettuoso* and *adagio* style, in their greatest extremes—we then begin to perceive something like a trick, and are little more affected than by reading the marginal directions in a music book. The inspiration of genius is fled; that which before

breathed the very soul of music, becomes little better than a puppet, and like all other puppets, is good only according to its compass, and the number of evolutions it performs. We have here spoken of directness and simplicity of style, as Mr. Braham's *forte* in singing; for though we agree that he has too much ornament, (a very little is too much), yet we can by no means allow that this can be made an unqualified objection to his style, for he has much less than other singers.

Of Mr. Phillips we would not wish to speak; but as he puts himself forward and is put forward by others, we must say something. He is said to be an imitator of Mr. Braham; if so, the imitation is a vile one. This gentleman has one qualification, which has been said to be the great secret of pleasing others, that he is evidently pleased with himself. But he does not produce a corresponding effect upon us; we have not one particle of sympathy with his wonderful self-complacency. We should wish never to hear him sing again; or, if he must sing, at least, we should hope never to see him act: let him not top his part—why should he sigh, and ogle, and languish, and display all his accomplishments—he should spare the side-boxes!—Mrs. Dickons never appeared to us any thing but an ordinary musical instrument, and at present, she is very much out of tune. We do not

well understand what has been said of this piece having called forth all the musical strength of the house: except BRAHAM's, there was not a single song sung so as not to give pain, even to a moderately cultivated ear. In this censure, we do not (of course) include Miss KELLY; in seeing her, we never think of her singing. The comic parts of this Opera (if such they can be called) were sustained by Miss KELLY, Mr. MUNDEN, and Mr. KNIGHT. Miss KELLY did the little she had to do, with that fine unobtrusive good sense, and reluctant *naiveté*, which distinguish all her performances. If she carries her shyness of the audience and of her profession to a fault, not so Mr. MUNDEN. He outcaricatures caricature, and outgrimaces himself. We have seen him twice lately in the same character of a drunken confidant, and were both times heartily tired. He is not only perfectly conscious what he is about, but has a thorough understanding with the audience all along. He makes his face up into a bad joke, and flings it right in the teeth of the spectators. The expression of the masks hanging out at the shop-windows, is less extravagant and distorted. There is no one on the stage who can, or at least who does, draw up his eyebrows, roll his eyes, thrust out his tongue, or drop his under jaw, in so astonishing a manner as Mr. MUNDEN; and if acting consisted in making wry faces, he

would be the greatest actor on the stage, instead of which he is, on these occasions, only a bad clown. His over-desire to produce effect, destroys all effect on our minds*.—Mr. KNIGHT played the servant very well; but in general, there is too much an appearance in his acting, as if he was moved by wires. His feeling always flies to the extremities: his vivacity is in his feet and finger-ends. He is a very lively automaton.

March 30.

THE farce of Love in Limbo, brought out at Covent-Garden Theatre, has no other merit than the plot, which, however, is neither very laughable nor very probable.—The melo-drame of Zembuca, besides the attractions of the scenery and music, has considerable neatness of point in the dialogue, to which LISTON gave its full effect.

* It will be seen, that this severe censure of MUNDEN is nearly reversed in the sequel of these remarks, and on a better acquaintance with this very able actor in characters more worthy of his powers.

MR. KEAN'S ZANGA.

May 25, 1815.

Mr. Kean played for his benefit on Wednesday, the character of Zanga, in the Revenge, (which he is to repeat), and the character of Abel Drugger from the Alchymist, (we are sorry to say for that night only). The house was crowded to excess. The play of the Revenge is an obvious transposition of Othello: the two principal characters are the same; only their colours are reversed. The giving the dark, treacherous, fierce, and remorseless character to the Moor, is an alteration, which is more in conformity to our prejudices, as well as to historical truth. We have seen Mr. Kean in no part, to which his general style of acting is so completely adapted as to this, or to which he has given greater spirit and effect. He had all the wild impetuosity of barbarous revenge, the glowing energy of the untamed children of the

sun, whose blood drinks up the radiance of fiercer skies. He was like a man stung with rage, and bursting with stifled passions. His hurried motions had the restlessness of the panther's: his wily caution, his cruel eye, his quivering visage, his violent gestures, his hollow pauses, his abrupt transitions, were all in character. The very vices of Mr. KEAN's general acting might almost be said to assist him in the part. What in our judgment he wants, is dignified repose, and deep internal sentiment. But in Zanga, nothing of this kind is required. The whole character is violent; the whole expression is in action. The only passage which struck us as one of calm and philosophical grandeur, and in which Mr. KEAN failed from an excess of misplaced energy, was the one in the conclusion, where he describes the tortures he is about to undergo, and expresses his contempt for them. Certainly, the predominant feeling here is that of stern, collected, impenetrable fortitude, and the expression given to it should not be that of a pantomimic exaggeration of the physical horrors to which he professes to rise superior. The mind in such a situation recoils upon itself, summons up its own powers and resources, and should seem to await the blow of fate with the stillness of death. The scene in which he discloses himself to Alonzo, and insults over his misery, was terrific: the

attitude in which he tramples on the body of his prostrate victim, was not the less dreadful from its being perfectly beautiful. Among the finest instances of natural expression, were the manner in which he interrupts himself in his relation to Alonzo, " I knew you could not bear it," and his reflection when he sees that Alonzo is dead—" And so is my revenge." The play should end here: the soliloquy afterwards is a mere drawling piece of common-place morality. We ought to add, that Mr. RAE acted the part of Alonzo with great force and feeling.

Mr. KEAN'S Abel Drugger was an exquisite piece of ludicrous *naiveté*. The first word he utters, " *Sure*," drew bursts of laughter and applause. The mixture of simplicity and cunning in the character could not be given with a more whimsical effect. First, there was the wonder of the poor Tobacconist, when he is told by the Conjurer that his name is Abel, and that he was born on a Wednesday; then the conflict between his apprehensions and his cupidity, as he becomes more convinced that Subtle is a person who has dealings with the devil; and lastly, his contrivances to get all the information he can, without paying for it. His dis-

tress is at the height, when the two-guinea pocket-piece is found upon him: "He had received it from his grandmother, and would fain save it for his grand-children." The battle between him and Face (OXBERRY) was irresistible; and he went off after he had got well through it, strutting, and fluttering his cloak about, much in the same manner that a game cock flaps his wings after a victory. We wish he would do it again!

MR. BANNISTER'S FAREWELL.

June 3, 1815.

MR. BANNISTER had the comedy of The World, and the after-piece of The Children in the Wood, for his benefit on Thursday last, at Drury-Lane. Mr. GATTIE, in consequence of the indisposition of Mr. DOWTON, undertook the part of Index in the play. This alteration occasioned a short interruption; but after the usual explanation, the piece proceeded, and in our opinion, Mr. GATTIE made a very excellent representative of the busy, whiffling, insignificant, but good-natured character which he personated. The figure and manner of this actor are certainly better fitted for the part than those of DOWTON, who has too much weight and sturdiness of mind and body, to run about on ladies' errands, and take an interest in every thing that does not concern him. He is not a Will Wimble. Mr. BANNISTER played the

character of Echo, which is a whimsical mixture of simplicity, affectation, and good-nature, with his usual excellence. Mr. ELLISTON's Cheviot is one of his best characters. Whatever requires spirit, animation, or the lively expression of natural feelings, he does well. Sentimental comedy is the equivocal reflection of tragedy in common life, and Mr. ELLISTON can rehearse the one just well enough to play the other. The coincidence is complete. He raises his voice to a pitch of romantic rapture, or lowers it to the tones of sullen despondence and disappointment, with the happiest effect. The Duke, in the Honey-Moon, is the *assumption* of an impassioned character. The Comedy of the World, is one of the most ingenious and amusing of the modern stage. It has great neatness of dialogue, and considerable originality, as well as sprightliness of character. It is, however, chargeable with a grossness which is common to modern plays, we mean, the grossness of fashionable life in the men, and the grossness of fine sentiment in the women. Mrs. DAVISON did not soften down the exuberant qualities of Lady Bloomfield into any thing like decency; and the two fashionable loungers, Loiter and Dauntless, were certainly done to the life by DECAMP and R. PALMER. Between the acts, Mr. BRAHAM sung Robin Adair, and The Death of Nelson, in his most delightful style.

In the after-piece, Mr. BANNISTER played the favourite part of Walter, in The Children in the Wood, for the last time.

He then came forward to take his leave of the Stage, in a Farewell Address, in which he expressed his thanks for the long and flattering patronage he had received from the public. We do not wonder that his feelings were overpowered on this occasion: our own (we confess it) were nearly so too. We remember him in the first heyday of our youthful spirits, in The Prize—which he played so delightfully with that fine old croaker SUETT, and Madame STORACE—in the farce of My Grandmother, in the Son-in-Law, in Autolycus, and in Scrub, in which our satisfaction was at its height. At that time, KING, and PARSONS, and DODD, and QUICK, and EDWIN, were in the full vigour of their reputation, who are now all gone! We still feel the vivid delight with which we used to see their names in the play-bills, as we went along to the theatre. BANNISTER was almost the last of these that remained; and we parted with him as we should with one of our oldest and best friends. The most pleasant feature in the profession of a player, and which is peculiar to it, is, that we not only admire the talents of those who adorn it, but we contract a personal intimacy with them. There is no class of society whom so many persons regard with affec-

tion as actors. We greet them on the stage; we like to meet them in the streets; they always recall to us pleasant associations; and we feel our gratitude excited, without the uneasiness of a sense of obligation. The very gaiety and popularity, however, which surrounds the life of a favourite performer, makes the retiring from it a very serious business. It glances a mortifying reflection on the shortness of human life, and the vanity of human pleasures. Something reminds us, that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

COMUS.

June 11, 1815.

Comus has been got up at Covent-Garden Theatre with great splendour, and has had as much success as was to be expected. The genius of Milton was essentially *undramatic:* he saw all objects from his own point of view, and with certain exclusive preferences. Shakespear, on the contrary, had no personal character, and no moral principle, except that of good-nature. He took no part in the scene he describes, but gave fair play to all his characters, and left virtue and vice, folly and wisdom, right and wrong, to fight it out between themselves, just as they do on their "old prize-fighting stage,"—the world. He is only the vehicle for the sentiments of his characters. Milton's characters are only a vehicle for his own. Comus is a didactic poem, or a dialogue in verse, on the advantages or disadvantages of virtue and

vice. It is merely a discussion of general topics, but with a beauty of language and richness of illustration, that in the perusal leave no feeling of the want of any more powerful interest. On the stage, the poetry of course lost above half of its effect: but this was compensated to the audience by every advantage of scenery and decoration. By the help of dance and song, "of mask and antique pageantry," this most delightful poem went off as well as any common pantomime. Mr. CONWAY topped the part of Comus with his usual felicity, and seemed almost as if the genius of a maypole had inspired a human form. He certainly gives a totally new idea of the character. We allow him to be "a marvellous proper man," but we see nothing of the magician, or the son of Bacchus and Circe in him. He is said to make a very handsome Comus: so he would make a very handsome Caliban; and the common sense of the transformation would be the same. Miss STEPHENS played the First Nymph very prettily and insipidly; and Miss MATTHEWS played the Second Nymph with appropriate significance of nods and smiles. Mrs. FAUCIT, as the Lady, rehearsed the speeches in praise of virtue very well, and acted the scene of the Enchanted Chair admirably. She seemed changed into a statue of alabaster. Miss FOOTE made a very elegant Younger Brother.—It is only justice to add, that Mr. DURUSET gave the songs of the

Spirit with equal taste and effect; and in particular, sung the final invocation to Sabrina in a full and powerful tone of voice, which we have seldom heard surpassed.

These kind of allegorical compositions are necessarily unfit for actual representation. Every thing on the stage takes a literal, palpable shape, and is embodied to the sight. So much is done by the senses, that the imagination is not prepared to eke out any deficiency that may occur. We resign ourselves, as it were, to the illusion of the scene: we take it for granted, that whatever happens within that "magic circle" is real; and whatever happens without it, is nothing. The eye of the mind cannot penetrate through the glare of lights which surround it, to the pure empyrean of thought and fancy; and the whole world of imagination fades into a dim and refined abstraction, compared with that part of it, which is brought out dressed, painted, moving, and breathing, a speaking pantomime before us. Whatever is seen or done, is sure to tell: what is heard only, unless it relates to what is seen or done, has little or no effect. All the fine writing in the world, therefore, which does not find its immediate interpretation in the objects or situations before us, is at best but elegant impertinence. We will just take two passages out of Comus, to shew how little the beauty of the poetry adds

to the interest on the stage; the first is from the speech of the Spirit as Thyrsis:—

" This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
" Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb
" Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
" I sat me down to watch upon a bank
" With ivy canopied, and interwove
" With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,
" Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
" To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
" Till Fancy had her fill; but ere a close,
" The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
" And filled the air with barbarous dissonance:
" At which I ceased, and listen'd them a while,
" Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
" Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted steeds
" That draw the litter of close-curtain'd sleep:
" At last a soft and solemn breathing sound
" Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,
" And stole upon the air, that even Silence
" Was took ere she was 'ware, and wished she might
" Deny her nature, and be never more
" Still to be so displaced."

This passage was recited by Mr. DURUSET; and the other, which we proposed to quote, equally became the mouth of Mr. CONWAY:—

" Two such I saw, what time the labour'd ox
" In his loose traces from the furrow came,
" And the swinkt hedger at his supper sat;
" I saw them under a green mantling vine
" That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
" Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots:

" Their port was more than human as they stood :
" I took it for a fairy vision
" Of some gay creatures of the element,
" That in the colours of the rainbow live
" And play in th' plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,
" And as I pass'd, I worshipp'd."

To those of our readers who may not be acquainted with Comus, these exquisite passages will be quite new, though they may have lately heard them on the stage.

There was an evident want of adaptation to theatrical representation in the last scene, where Comus persists in offering the Lady the cup, which she as obstinately rejects, without any *visible* reason. In the poetical allegory, it is the poisoned cup of pleasure : on the stage, it is a goblet filled with wine, which it seems strange she should refuse, as the person who presents it to her, has certainly no appearance of any dealings with the devil.

Milton's Comus is not equal to Lycidas, nor to Samson Agonistes. It wants interest and passion, which both the others have. Lycidas is a fine effusion of classical sentiment in a youthful scholar : his Samson Agonistes is almost a canonisation of all the high moral and religious prejudices of his maturer years. *We* have no less respect for the memory of Milton as a patriot than as a poet. Whether he was a *true* patriot, we shall not enquire : he was at least a *consistent* one.

He did not retract his defence of the people of England; he did not say that his sonnets to VANE or CROMWELL were meant ironically; he was not appointed Poet-Laureat to a Court which he had reviled and insulted; he accepted neither place nor pension; nor did he write paltry sonnets upon the "Royal fortitude" of the House of STUART, by which, however, they really lost something*.

* In the last edition of the works of a modern Poet, there "a Sonnet to the King, complimenting him on "his royal fortitude." The story of the Female Vagrant, which very beautifully and affectingly describes the miseries brought on the lower classes by war, in bearing which the said "royal fortitude" is so nobly exercised, is very properly struck out of the collection.

MR. KEAN'S LEON.

June 28, 1815.

We went to see Mr. Kean in Leon, at Drury-Lane, and, on the whole, liked him less in it than we formerly liked Mr. Kemble in the same part. This preference, however, relates chiefly to personal considerations. In the first scenes of the play, Mr. Kemble's face and figure had a nobleness in them, which formed a contrast to the assumed character of the idiot, and thus carried off the disgusting effect of the part. Mr. Kean both acted and looked it too well. At the same time, we must do justice to the admirable comic talents displayed by Mr. Kean on this occasion. We never saw or heard looks or tones more appropriate and ludicrous. The house was in a roar. His alarm on being first introduced to his mistress, his profession of being "very loving," his shame after first saluting the lady, and his chuckling half-triumph on the repetition of the

ceremony, were complete acting. Above all, we admired the careless self-complacent idiotcy with which he marched in, carrying his wife's fan, and holding up her hand. It was the triumph of folly. Even Mr. Liston, with all his inimitable graces in that way, could not have bettered it. In the serious part of the character he appeared to us less perfect. There was not repose enough, not enough of dignity. Leon, we apprehend, ought to be the man of spirit, but still more the gentleman. He has to stand in general upon the defensive, upon his own rights, upon his own ground, and need not bluster, or look fierce. We will mention one instance in particular. Where he tells the Duke to leave the house, which we think he should do with perfect coolness and confidence, he pointed with his finger to the door, "There, there," with the same significant inveteracy of manner, as where, in Iago, he points to the dead body of Othello. The other parts of the play were well supported. Mrs. Glover deserves great praise for her Estifania. Mr. Bartley shewed both judgment and humour in the Copper Captain; and yet we were not satisfied with his performance. There is a thinness in his voice, and a plumpness in his person, neither of which is to our taste. His laughing when he finds that Cacafogo had been cheated by Estifania, was perfectly well done; but there was an effeminacy

in his voice which took away from the hearty effect which BANNISTER used to give to this scene. KNIGHT, in the old woman, was excellent. His reiteration of "What?" in answer to the Copper Captain's questions, had the startling effect produced by letting off a pistol close at one's ears. It evidently proceeded from a person blest with "double deafness" of body and mind. The morality of this excellent comedy is very indifferent; and having been prompted by the observations of some persons of fashion near us, we got into a train of agreeable reflections on the progressive refinement of this our age and country, which it was our intention to have communicated to our readers,—but that we dropt them in the lobbies!

THE TEMPEST.

July 23, 1815.

As we returned some evenings ago from seeing the Tempest at Covent-Garden, we almost came to the resolution of never going to another representation of a play of SHAKESPEAR's as long as we lived; and we certainly did come to this determination, that we never would go *by choice*. To call it a representation, is indeed an abuse of language: it is travestie, caricature, any thing you please, but a representation. Even those daubs of pictures, formerly exhibited under the title of the Shakespear Gallery, had a less evident tendency to disturb and distort all the previous notions we had imbibed from reading SHAKESPEAR. In the first place, it was thought fit and necessary, in order to gratify the sound sense, the steady, sober judgment, and natural unsophisticated feelings of Englishmen a hundred years ago, to modernize the original

play, and to disfigure its simple and beautiful structure, by loading it with the common-place, clap-trap sentiments, artificial contrasts of situations and character, and all the heavy tinsel and affected formality which DRYDEN had borrowed from the French school. And be it observed, further, that these same anomalous, unmeaning, vulgar, and ridiculous additions, are all that *take* in the present farcical representation of the Tempest. The beautiful, the exquisitely beautiful descriptions in SHAKESPEAR, the still more refined, and more affecting sentiments, are not only not applauded as they ought to be (what fine murmur of applause should do them justice?)—they are not understood, nor are they even heard. The lips of the actors are seen to move, but the sounds they utter exciting no corresponding emotions in the breast, are no more distinguished than the repetition of so many cabalistical words. The ears of the audience are not prepared to drink in the music of the poet; or grant that they were, the bitterness of disappointment would only succeed to the stupor of indifference.

SHAKESPEAR has given to Prospero, Ariel, and the other characters in this play, language such as wizards and spirits, "the gay creatures of the element," might want to express their thoughts and purposes, and this language is here put into the mouth of Messrs. YOUNG, ABBOTT,

and Emery, and of Misses Matthews, Bristow, and Booth. "'Tis much." Mr. Young is in general what is called a respectable actor. Now, as this is a phrase which does not seem to be very clearly understood by those who most frequently use it, we shall take this opportunity to define it. A respectable actor then, is one who seldom gratifies, and who seldom offends us; who never disappoints us, because we do not expect any thing from him, and who takes care never to rouse our dormant admiration by any unlooked-for strokes of excellence. In short, an actor of this class (not to speak it profanely) is a mere machine, who walks and speaks his part; who, having a tolerable voice, face, and figure, reposes entirely and with a prepossessing self-complacency on these natural advantages: who never risks a failure, because he never makes an effort; who keeps on the safe side of custom and decorum, without attempting improper liberties with his art; and who has not genius or spirit enough to do either well or ill. A respectable actor is on the stage, much what a pretty woman is in private life, who trusts to her outward attractions, and does not commit her taste or understanding, by hazardous attempts to shine in conversation. So we have generals, who leave every thing to be done by their men; patriots, whose reputation depends on their estates; and authors, who live on the

stock of ideas they have in common with their readers.

Such is the best account we can give of the class of actors to which Mr. YOUNG belongs, and of which he forms a principal ornament. As long as he contents himself to play indifferent characters, we shall say nothing: but whenever he plays SHAKESPEAR, we must be excused if we take unequal revenge for the martyrdom which our feelings suffer. His Prospero was good for nothing; and consequently, was indescribably bad. It was grave without solemnity, stately without dignity, pompous without being impressive, and totally destitute of the wild, mysterious, preternatural character of the original. Prospero, as depicted by Mr. YOUNG, did not appear the potent wizard brooding in gloomy abstraction over the secrets of his art, and around whom spirits and airy shapes throng numberless "at his bidding;" but seemed himself an automaton, stupidly prompted by others: his lips moved up and down as if pulled by wires, not governed by the deep and varied impulses of passion; and his painted face, and snowy hair and beard, reminded us of the masks for the representation of Pantaloon. In a word, Mr. YOUNG did not personate Prospero, but a pedagogue teaching his scholars how to recite the part, and not teaching them well.

Of one of the actors who assisted at this

sacrifice of poetical genius, EMERY, we think as highly as any one can do: he is indeed, in his way, the most perfect actor on the stage. His representations of common rustic life have an absolute identity with the thing represented. But the power of his mind is evidently that of imitation, not that of creation. He has nothing romantic, grotesque, or imaginary about him. Every thing in his hands takes a local and habitual shape. Now, Caliban is a mere creation; one of the wildest and most abstracted of all SHAKESPEAR'S characters, whose deformity is only redeemed by the power and truth of the imagination displayed in it. It is the essence of grossness, but there is not the smallest vulgarity in it. SHAKESPEAR has described the brutal mind of this man-monster in contact with the pure and original forms of nature; the character grows out of the soil where it is rooted uncontrouled, uncouth, and wild, uncramped by any of the meannesses of custom. It is quite remote from any thing provincial; from the manners or dialect of any county in England. Mr. EMERY had nothing of Caliban but his gaberdine, which did not become him. (We liked Mr. GRIMALDI'S Orson much better, which we saw afterwards in the pantomime). SHAKESPEAR has, by a process of imagination usual with him, drawn off from Caliban the elements of every thing etherial and refined, to compound them

into the unearthly mould of Ariel. Nothing was ever more finely conceived than this contrast between the material and the spiritual, the gross and delicate. Miss MATTHEWS played and sung Ariel. She is to be sure a very "tricksy spirit:" and all that we can say in her praise is, that she is a better representative of the sylph-like form of the character, than the light and portable Mrs. BLAND, who used formerly to play it. She certainly does not sing the songs so well. We do not however wish to hear them sung, though never so well; no music can add any thing to their magical effect.—The words of SHAKESPEAR would be sweet, even "after the songs of Apollo!"

MY WIFE! WHAT WIFE?

July 29, 1815.

The Haymarket is the most sociable of all our theatres. A wonderful concentration of interest, and an agreeable equality of pretension reign here. There is an air of unusual familiarity between the audience and the actors; the pit shakes hands with the boxes, and the galleries descend, from the invisible height to which they are raised at the other theatres, half-way into the orchestra. Now we have certain remains of a sneaking predilection for this mode of accommodating differences between all parts of the house; this average dissemination of comfort, and immediate circulation of enjoyment; and we take our places (just as it happens), on the same good terms with ourselves and our neighbours, as we should in sitting down to an ordinary at an inn. Every thing, however, has its draw-backs; and the Little Theatre in the

Haymarket is not without them. If, for example, a party of elderly gentlewomen should come into a box close at your elbow, and immediately begin to talk loud, with an evident disregard of those around them, your only chance is either to quit the house altogether, or (if you really wish to hear the play), to remove to the very opposite side of it; for the ill-breeding of persons of that class, sex, and time of life, is incorrigible. At the great Theatres, it is sometimes very difficult to hear, for the noise and quarrelling in the gallery; here the only interruption to the performance is from the overflowing garrulity and friendly tittle-tattle of the boxes. The gods (as they are called), at Drury-lane and Covent-garden, we suspect, "keep such a dreadful pudder o'er our heads," from their impatience at not being able to hear what is passing below; and, at the minor theatres, are the most quiet and attentive of the audience.

It is the immemorial practice of the Haymarket Theatre to bring out, every season, a number of new pieces, good, bad, or indifferent. To this principle we are indebted for an odd play, with an odd title, "My Wife! What Wife?" and whether it belongs to the class of good, bad, or indifferent, we could not make up our minds at the time, and it has nearly escaped our memory since. Whether from its excellences or its absurdities, it is altogether

very amusing. The best part of it is a very unaccountable, easy, impudent, blundering Irish footman, admirably represented by Mr. Tokely, whom we here take the liberty of introducing to the notice of our readers. "Good Mr. Tokely, we desire better acquaintance with you." We do not know whether this gentleman is himself an Irishman, but he has a wonderful sympathy with the manners and peculiarities of the character he had to represent. The ease, the ignorance, the impudence, the simplicity, the cunning, the lying, the good-nature, the absurdity, and the wit of the common character of the Irish, were depicted with equal fidelity and *naiveté* by the very lively actor; and his *brogue* was throughout a complete accompaniment to the sense. It floated up and down, and twisted round, and rose and fell, and started off or rattled on, just as the gusts of passion led.

The Irish and the Scotch brogue are very characteristic. In the one, the words are tumbled out altogether: in the other, every syllable is held fast between the teeth and kept in a sort of undulating suspense, lest circumstances should require a retractation before the end of the sentence. The Irish character is impetuous: the Scotch circumspect. The one is extreme unconsciousness, the other extreme consciousness. The one depends almost entirely on animal spirits, the other on will; the one on the feeling of the mo-

ment, the other on the calculation of consequences. The Irish character is therefore much more adapted for the stage: it presents more heterogeneous materials, and it is only unconscious absurdity *that excites laughter. We* seldom see a *Scotchman introduced into an* English farce: *whereas an Irishman is always* ready to be served up, and it is a standing dish at this kind of entertainment. Mr. TOKELY sung two songs in the afterpiece with great effect. The laughing song was a thing of pure execution, made out of nothing but the feeling of humour in the actor.

Mr. TERRY played the principal serious character in "My Wife! What Wife?" He is a very careful and judicious actor: but his execution overlays the character. He is a walking grievance on the stage; a robust personification of the *comedie larmoyante;* a rock dropping tears of crystal; an iron figure, "in the likeness of a sigh." Mr. JONES was intended as a lively set-off to Mr. TERRY. It was but a diversity of wretchedness. Mr. JONES is no favourite of ours. He is always the same Mr. JONES, who shews his teeth, and rolls his eyes,—

"And looks like a jackdaw just caught in a snare."

Mr. MEGGETT has played Octavian twice at this theatre. He is a very decent, disagreeable actor, of the second or third-rate, who takes a great deal of pains to do ill. He did not, however, deserve to be hissed, and he only deserves to be applauded, because he was hissed undeservedly. He is a Scotch edition of CONWAY, without his beauty, and without his talent for noisy declamation.

Our play-houses are just now crowded with French people, with or without white cockades. A very intelligent French man and woman sat behind us the other evening at the representation of the Mountaineers, (one of the best of our modern plays) who were exceedingly shocked at the constant transitions from tragic to comic in this piece. It is strange that a people who have no keeping in themselves, should be offended at our want of keeping in theatrical representations. But it is an old remark, that the manners of every nation and their dramatic taste are opposite to each other. In the present instance, there can be no question, but that the distinguishing character of the English is gravity, and of the French levity. How then is is it that this is reversed on the stage? Because the English wish to relieve the continuity of their feelings by something light and even farcical, and the French cannot afford to offer the

same temptation to their natural levity. They become grave only by system, and the formality of their artificial style is resorted to as a preservative against the infection of their national disposition. One quaint line in a thousand sad ones, operating on their mercurial and volatile spirits, would turn the whole to farce. The English are sufficiently tenacious of strong passion to retain it in spite of other feelings: the French are only tragic by the force of dulness, and every thing serious would fly at the appearance of a jest.

MR. HARLEY'S FIDGET.

August 5, 1815.

Mr. Harley is an addition to the comic strength of the Lyceum. We have not seen him in the part of Leatherhead, in The Blue Stocking, in which he has been much spoken of; but as an intriguing knave of a servant, he was the life of a very dull and incredible farce, which came out the other night under the title of My Aunt; and we afterwards liked him still better as Fidget, in The Boarding House, where he had more scope for his abilities. He gave the part with all the liveliness, insinuating complaisance, and volubility of speech and motion, which belong to it. He has a great deal of vivacity, archness, and that quaint extravagance, which constitutes the most agreeable kind of buffoonery. We think it likely he will become a considerable favourite with the public; and the more so, because he is not only a very

amusing actor, but also possesses those recommendations of face, person, and manner, which go a great way in conciliating public favour. These are the more necessary in those burlesque characters, which have little foundation in real life, and which, as they serve chiefly to furnish opportunities for the drollery of the actor to display itself, bring him constantly before us in his personal capacity.

We are really glad to be pleased whenever we can, and we were pleased with Peter Fidget. His dress and his address are equally comic and in character. He wears a white morning jean coat, and a white wig, the curls of which hang down like lappets over his shoulders, and form a good contrast with the plump, rosy, shining face beneath it. He comes bolt upon the stage, and jumps into the good graces of the audience before they have time to defend themselves. Peter Fidget, "master of a boarding-house, with a green door—brass knocker—No. 1, round the corner—facing the Steyne—Brighton"—is a very impudent, rattling fellow, with a world of business and cares on his back, which however it seems broad enough to bear, the lightness of whose head gets the better of the heaviness of his heels, and whose person thrives in proportion to his custom. It is altogether a very laughable exaggeration, and lost none of its effect in the hands of Mr. HARLEY.

In the new farce of My Aunt, Mr. Wallack played the character of a fashionable rake, and he is said to have played it well. If this is a good specimen of the class, we can only say we do not wish to extend our acquaintance with it; for we never saw any thing more disagreeable. Miss Poole played the Niece to Mrs. Harlowe's Aunt; and seemed a very proper niece for such an aunt. Mr. Pyne "warbled his love-lorn ditties all night long;"—for a despairing lover, we never saw any one look better, or flushed with a more purple grace—"as one incapable of his own distress." He appears to have taken a hint from Sir John Suckling;—

"Prythee, why so pale, fond lover,
"Prythee why so pale?
"Will, if looking well won't win her,
"Looking ill prevail?
"Prythee, why so pale?"

We went to the Haymarket Theatre on Thursday, to see Mr. Meggett in the Iron Chest, with that laudable desire which we always feel to find out any error in our former opinions; but in this desire, as it generally happens, we were disappointed. We however consider Mr. Meggett's Sir Edward Mortimer as a much

more successful delineation than his Octavian. The character is taken from Falkland, in Mr. GODWIN's Caleb Williams, which is unquestionably the best modern novel. The character, as it is treated by COLMAN, is one of much less genius and elevation than the original. It is harsh, heavy, fierce, and painfully irritable, but at the same time forcible and affecting. Such, at least, was the impression we received from Mr. MEGGETT's representation of it. What this actor wants is genial expression, and a certain general impulse which is inseparable from all passion. The tide of feeling in him frets itself away in narrow nooks and estuaries. His habitual manner is too hard and dry—he makes too dead a set at every thing. He grinds his words out between his teeth as if he had a lock-jaw, and his action is clenched till it resembles the commencement of a fit of the epilepsy. He strains his muscles till he seems to have lost the use of them. If Mr. KEMBLE was hard, Mr. MEGGETT is rigid, to a petrifying degree. We however think that he gave considerable force and feeling to the part, by the justness of his conception, and by the energy of his execution. But neither energy nor good sense is sufficient to make the great actor:—it requires genius, which nothing can give. Study may teach us to distinguish the forms and classes of things; but it is genius alone which puts us in posses-

sion of the powers of art or nature. This play, when it first came out, excited a great deal of idle controversy and vulgar abuse. It appears to us to be a play of great interest; but that interest depends upon the sentiment, and not on the story or situations, and consequently is very little understood by a mixed audience.

Miss GREVILLE made an interesting representative of Helen, the mistress of Sir Edward Mortimer. Mr. BARNARD had considerable merit in Wilford, the Caleb Williams of the piece; though he seemed somewhat too insignificant an instrument to produce such terrible effects. Mr. TOKELY played the ruffian (Orson) admirably well. Mrs. BELFIELD, his Dulcinea in the gang of robbers, perfectly frightened us in the cave-scene. We felt as much disconcerted by the uncalled-for phrensy of this theatrical amazon, as the Squire of Dames in SPENSER did, when he was carried off by the giantess, Ogygia; or, as Mr. Capel Lofft must have done the other day, when Mrs. Mary Ann Bulmer pounced upon him in the Chronicle.

Mr. FOOTE was the brother of Sir Edward Mortimer. This gentleman is of the WROUGHTON school; that is, he belongs to the old English class of honest country gentlemen, who abound more in good nature than good sense, and who have a most plentiful lack of gall and wit. Mr. FOOTE does not discredit

this branch of the profession. These persons are always very comfortable in themselves, and busy about other people. This is exceedingly provoking. They speak with good emphasis and discretion, and are in general of a reasonable corpulence. Whenever we see an actor of this class, with a hat and feather, a gold belt, and more than ordinary merit, we are strangely reminded of our old friend Mr. GYNGELL, the celebrated itinerant manager, and the only showman in England, who, after the festivity of the week, makes a point of staying the Sunday over, and goes with all his family to church.

LIVING IN LONDON.

August 12, 1815.

A NEW Comedy, called Living in London, by the author (as it appears) of Love and Gout, has been brought forward at the Haymarket Theatre. It is in three acts. The first act promised exceedingly well. The scenes were well-contrived, and the dialogue was neat and pointed. But in the second and third, the comic invention of the writer seemed to be completely exhausted; his plot became entangled and ridiculous, and he strove to relieve the wearied attention of the audience, by some of the most desperate attempts at *double entendre* we ever remember. Thus a servant is made to say, that "no one can *bring up* his master's dinner but himself." We are told by very good authority, that "want of decency is want of sense." The plot is double, and equally ill-supported in both its branches. A lady of fashion (who was made as little dis-

gusting as the part would permit by Miss Greville) makes overtures of love to a nobleman, (Lord Clamourcourt, Mr. Foote), by publishing an account of a supposed intrigue between herself and him in the newspapers. The device is new, at least. The same nobleman is himself made jealous of his wife by the assumption of her brother's name (Neville) by a coxcomb of his acquaintance, by the circumstance of a letter directed to the real Neville having been received by the pretended one, and by the blunders which follow from it. The whole developement of the plot is carried on by letters, and there is hardly a scene towards the conclusion, in which a footman does not come in, as the bearer of some alarming piece of intelligence. Lord Clamourcourt, just as he is sitting down to dinner with his wife, receives a letter from his mistress; he hurries away, and his Lady having no appetite left, orders the dinner back. Lord Clamourcourt is no sooner arrived at the place of assignation than he receives an anonymous letter, informing him that Neville is at his house, and he flies back on the wings of jealousy, as he had come on those of love. All this is very artificial and improbable. *Quod sic mihi ostendis incredulus odi.*

We were a good deal disappointed in this play, as from the commencement we had augured very favourably of it. There was not

much attempt to draw out the particular abilities of the actors; and the little that there was, did not succeed. MATTHEWS, who is in general exceedingly amusing, did not appear at all to advantage. The author did not seem to understand what use to make of him. He was an automaton put into his hands, of which he did not know how to turn the pegs. He is shoved on, and then shoved off the stage to no purpose, as if his exit or his entrance made the jest. One person twirls him round by the flap of his coat, and another jerks him back again by the tail of his perriwig. He is first a stupid servant, and is next metamorphosed, without taking his degrees, into an ignorant doctor. He changes his dress, but the same person remains. He has nothing to do but to run about like a dog to fetch and carry, or to fidget over the stage like the dolls that dance (to please the children) to the barrel-organs in the street. For our own parts, we had rather see Punch and the puppet-shew.

THE KING'S PROXY.

August 26, 1815.

A NEW Opera was brought out at the Lyceum, last week, called The King's Proxy; or Judge for yourself. If we were to judge for ourselves, we should conceive that Mr. ARNOLD must have dreamt this opera. It might be called the Manager's Opera. It is just what might be supposed to occur to him, nodding and half asleep in his arm-chair after dinner, having fatigued himself all the morning with ransacking the refuse of the theatre for the last ten years. In this dozing state, it seems that from the wretched fragments strewed on the floor, the essence of four hundred rejected pieces flew up and took possession of his brain, with all that is thread-bare in plot, lifeless in wit, and sickly in sentiment. PLATO, in one of his immortal dialogues, supposes a man to be shut up in a cave with his back to the light, so that he sees

nothing but the shadows of men passing and repassing on the wall of his prison. The Manager of the Lyceum Theatre appears to be much in the same situation. He does not get a single glimpse of life or nature, but as he has seen it represented on his own boards, or conned it over in his manuscripts. The apparitions of gilded sceptres, painted groves and castles, wandering damsels, cruel fathers and tender lovers, float in incessant confusion before him. His characters are the shadows of a shade; but he keeps a very exact inventory of his scenery and dresses, and can always command the stud-estra.

Mr. ARNOLD may be safely placed at the head of a very prevailing class of poets. He writes with the fewest ideas possible; his meaning is more nicely balanced between sense and nonsense, than that of any of his competitors; he succeeds from the perfect insignificance of his pretensions, and fails to offend through downright imbecility. The story of the present piece, (built on the well-known tradition of the Saxon King who was deceived by one of his courtiers in the choice of his wife), afforded ample scope for striking situation and effect; but Mr. ARNOLD has perfectly neutralised all interest in it. In this he was successfully seconded by those able associates, Mr. and Mrs. T. COOKE, Mr. PYNE, Mr. WALLACK, by the sturdy pathos of

Fawcett, and Miss Poole's elegant dishabille. One proof of talent the author has shewn, we allow—and that is, he has contrived to make Miss Kelly disagreeable in the part of Editha. The only good thing in the play was a dance by Miss Luppino and Miss C. Bristow.

THE MAID AND THE MAGPIE.

Sept. 2, 1815.

A PIECE has been brought out at the Lyceum, called the Maid and the Magpie, translated from the French, and said to be founded on a true story of a girl having been condemned for a theft, which was discovered after her death to have been committed by a magpie. The catastrophe is here altered. The play itself is a very delightful little piece. It unites a great deal of lightness and gaiety with an equal degree of interest. The dialogue is kept up with spirit, and the story never flags. The incidents, though numerous and complicated with a number of minute circumstances, are very clearly and artfully connected together. The spirit of the French stage is manifest through the whole performance, as well as its supriority to the general run of our present dramatic productions. The superiority of our old comedy to the French (if

we make the single exception of MOLIERE) is to be traced to the greater variety and originality of our national characters. The French, however, have the advantage of us in playing with the common-place surface of comedy, in the harlequinade of surprises and escapes, in the easy gaiety of the dialogue, and in the delineation of character, neither insipid nor overcharged.

The whole piece was excellently cast. Miss KELLY was the life of it. OXBERRY made a very good Jew. Mrs. HARLOWE was an excellent representative of the busy, bustling, scolding housewife; and Mr. GATTIE played the Justice of the Peace with good emphasis and discretion. The humour of this last actor, if not exceedingly powerful, is always natural and easy. KNIGHT did not make so much of his part as he usually does.

THE HYPOCRITE.

Drury-Lane, Sept. 16, 1811.

The Tartuffe, the original of the Hypocrite, is a play that we do not very well understand. Still less do we understand the Hypocrite, which is taken from it. In the former, the glaring improbability of the plot, the absurdity of a man's imposing on the credulity of another in spite of the evidence of his senses, and without any proof of the sincerity of a religious charlatan but his own professions, is carried off by long formal speeches and dull pompous casuistry. We find our patience tired out, and our understanding perplexed, as if we were sitting by in a court of law. If there is nothing of nature, at least there is enough of art, in the French play. But in the Hypocrite, (we mean the principal character itself) there is neither the one nor the other. Tartuffe is a plausible, fair-spoken, long-winded knave, who if he does not convince, confounds his auditors.

In the Hypocrite of Bickerstaff, the insidious, fawning, sophistical, accomplished French Abbé is modernised into a low-lived, canting, impudent Methodist preacher; and this was the character which Mr. Dowton represented, we must say, too well. Dr. Cantwell is a sturdy beggar, and nothing more: he is not an impostor, but a bully. There is not in any thing that he says or does, in his looks, words or actions, the least reason that Sir John Lambert should admit him into his house and friendship, suffer him to make love to his wife and daughter, disinherit his son in his favour, and refuse to listen to any insinuation or proof offered against the virtue and piety of his treacherous inmate. In the manners and institutions of the old French *regime*, there was something to account for the blind ascendancy acquired by the good priest over his benefactor, who might have submitted to be cuckolded, robbed, cheated and insulted, as a tacit proof of his religion and loyalty. The inquisitorial power exercised by the Church was then so great, that a man who refused to be priest-ridden, might very soon be suspected of designs against the state. This is at least the best account we can give of the tameness of Orgon. But in this country, nothing of the kind could happen. A fellow like Dr. Cantwell could only have got admittance into the kitchen of Sir John Lambert—or to the ear

of old Lady Lambert. The animal magnetism of such spiritual guides, is with us directed against the weaker nerves of our female devotees.

We discovered nothing in Mr. Dowton's manner of giving the part to redeem its original improbability, or gloss over its obvious deformity. His locks are combed down smooth over his shoulders; but he does not sufficiently "sleek o'er his rugged looks." His tones, except where he assumes the whining twang of the conventicle, are harsh and abrupt. He sometimes exposes his true character prematurely and unnecessarily, as where he is sent to Charlotte with a message from her father. He is a very vulgar, coarse, *substantial* hypocrite. His hypocrisy appears to us of that kind which arises from ignorance and grossness, without any thing of refinement or ability, which yet the character requires. The cringing, subtle, accomplished master-villain, the man of talent and of the world, was wanting. It is, in a word, just that sort of hypocrisy which might supply a lazy adventurer in the place of work, which he might live and get fat upon, but which would not enable him to conduct plots and conspiracies in high life. We do not say that the fault is in Mr. Dowton. The author has attempted to amalgamate two contradictory characters, by engrafting our vulgar Me-

thodist on the courtly French impostor; and the error could not perhaps be remedied in the performance. The only scene which struck us as in Mr. DOWTON's best manner, as truly masterly, was that in which he listens with such profound indifference and unmoved gravity to the harangue of Mawworm. Mr. DOWTON's general excellence is in hearty ebullitions of generous and natural feeling, or in a certain swelling pride and vain-glorious exaggerated ostentation, as in Major Sturgeon, and not in constrained and artificial characters.

Mawworm, which is a purely local and national caricature, was admirably personated by OXBERRY. Mrs. SPARKS's old Lady Lambert, is, we think, one of the finest exhibitions of character on the stage. The attention which she pays to Dr. Cantwell, her expression of face and her fixed uplifted hands, were a picture which HOGARTH might have copied. The effects of the *spirit* in reviving the withered ardour of youth, and giving a second birth to forgotten raptures, were never better exemplified. Mrs. ORGER played young Lady Lambert as well as the equivocal nature of the part would admit; and Miss KELLY was as lively and interesting as usual in Charlotte. Of Mr. WALLACK we cannot speak so favourably as some of our cotemporaries. This gentleman "has honours thrust upon him" which he does

not deserve, and which, we should think, he does not wish. He has been declared, by the first authority, to stand at the head of his profession in the line of genteel comedy. It is usual, indeed, to congratulate us on the accession of Mr. WALLACK at the expence of Mr. DECAMP, but it is escaping from Scylla to Charybdis. We are glad to have parted with Mr. DECAMP, and should not be inconsolable for the loss of Mr. WALLACK.

The best thing we remember in Mr. COLERIDGE's tragedy of Remorse, and which gave the greatest satisfaction to the audience, was that part in which DECAMP was precipitated into a deep pit, from which, by the elaborate description which the poet had given of it, it was plainly impossible he should ever rise again. If Mr. WALLACK is puffed off and stuck at the top of his profession at this unmerciful rate, it would almost induce us to wish Mr. COLERIDGE to write another tragedy, to dispose of him in the same way as his predecessor.

MR. EDWARDS'S RICHARD III.

September 30, 1815.

A Mr. Edwards, who has occasionally played at private theatricals, appeared at Covent-Garden Theatre in the character of Richard the Third. It was one of those painful failures, for which we are so often indebted to the managers. How these profound judges, who exercise "sole sway and sovereignty" over this department of the public amusements, who have it in their power to admit or reject without appeal, whose whole lives have been occupied in this one subject, and whose interest (to say nothing of their reputation) must prompt them to use their very best judgment in deciding on the pretensions of the candidates for public favour, should yet be so completely ignorant of their profession, as to seem not to know the difference between the *best* and the *worst*, and frequently to bring forward in the most arduous characters, persons whom the meanest critic in the pit immediately

perceives to be totally disqualified for the part they have undertaken—is a problem which there would be some difficulty in solving. It might suggest to us also, a passing suspicion that the same discreet arbiters of taste suppress real excellence in the same manner as they obtrude incapacity on the notice of the public, if genius were not a thing so much rarer than the want of it.

If Mr. Edwards had shewn an extreme ignorance of the author, but had possessed the peculiar theatrical requisites of person, voice, and manner, we should not have been surprised at the managers having been deceived by imposing appearances. But Mr. Edwards failed, less from a misapprehension of his part, than from an entire defect of power to execute it. If every word had been uttered with perfect propriety (which however was very far from being the case) his gestures and manner would have made it ridiculous. Of personal defects of this kind, a man cannot be a judge himself; and his friends will not tell him. The managers of a play-house are the only persons who can screen any individual, possessed with an unfortunate theatrical *mania*, from exposing himself to public mortification and disgrace for the want of those professional qualifications of which they are supposed to be infallible judges.

At the same Theatre, a lady of the name of HUGHES has been brought out in Mandane, in the favourite Opera of Artaxerxes—we should hope, not in the place of Miss STEPHENS. We do not say this for the sake of any invidious comparison, but for our own sakes, and for the sake of the public. Miss HUGHES is, we believe, a very accomplished singer, with a fine and flexible voice, with considerable knowledge and execution. But where is the sweetness, the simplicity, the melting soul of music? There was a voluptuous delicacy, a *naiveté* in Miss STEPHENS's singing, which we have never heard before nor since, and of which we should be loth to be deprived. Her songs in Mandane lingered on the ear like an involuntary echo to the music—as if the sentiment were blended with and trembled on her voice. This was particularly the case in the two delightful airs, "If o'er the cruel tyrant love," and "Let not rage thy bosom firing." In the former of these, the notes faultered and fell from her lips like drops of dew from surcharged flowers. If it is impossible to be a judge of music without understanding it as a science, it is still more impossible to be so without understanding the sentiment it is intended to convey. Miss HUGHES declaimed and acted these two songs, instead of singing them. She lisps, and smiles, and bows, and overdoes her part constantly. We do not

think Mandane is at all the heroine she represents her—or, if she is, we do not wish to see her. This lady would do much better at the Opera.

Mr. DURUSET sung "Fair Semira" with taste and feeling. We wish, in hearing the song "In infancy our hopes and fears," we could have forgotten Miss RENNELL's simple, but sustained and impressive execution of it.—Mr. TAYLOR played Arbaces, instead of Mr. INCLEDON.

LOVERS' VOWS.

October 7, 1815.

Lovers' Vows has been brought forward at Drury-Lane Theatre, and a young lady of the name of Mardyn has appeared in the character of Amelia Wildenheim. Much has been said in her praise, and with a great deal of justice. Her face is handsome, and her figure is good, bordering (but not too much), on *embonpoint*. There is, also, a full luscious sweetness in her voice, which was in harmony with the sentiments she had to express. The whole of this play, which is of German origin, carries the romantic in sentiment and story to the extreme verge of decency as well as probability. The character of Amelia Wildenheim is its principal charm. The open, undisguised simplicity of this character is, however, so enthusiastically extravagant, as to excite some little surprise and incredulity on an English stage. The portrait is too naked, but still it is the nakedness of innocence. She lets us see into the bottom

of her heart, but there is nothing there which she need wish to disguise. Mrs. MARDYN did the part very delightfully—with great spirit, truth, and feeling. She, perhaps, gave it a greater maturity of consciousness than it is supposed to possess. Her action is, in general, graceful and easy, but her movements were, at times, too youthful and unrestrained, and too much like *waltzing*.

Mrs. GLOVER and Mr. POPE did ample justice to the principal *moral* characters in the drama; and we were perfectly satisfied with Mr. WALLACK in Anhalt, the tutor and lover of Amelia. Some of the situations in this popular play (let the critics say what they will of their extravagance), are very affecting, and we will venture our opinion, that more tears were shed on this one occasion, than there would be at the representation of Hamlet, Othello, Lear, and Macbeth, for a whole season. This is not the fault of SHAKESPEAR, but neither is it the fault of KOTZEBUE.

MR. DOWTON came out for the first time in the character of Shylock, in the Merchant of Venice. Our own expectations were not raised very high on this occasion, and they were not disappointed. All the first part of the character, the habitual malignity of Shylock, his keen sarcasms and general invectives, were fully

understood, and given with equal force and discrimination. His manner of turning the bond into a "merry jest," and his ironical indifference about it, were an improvement which Mr. Dowton had borrowed from the comic art. But when the character is brought into action, that is, when the passions are let loose, and excited to the highest pitch of malignity, joy, or agony, he failed, not merely from the breaking down of his voice, but from the want of that movement and tide of passion, which overcomes every external disadvantage, and bears down every thing in its course. We think Mr. Dowton was wrong in several of his conceptions in the trial scene and other places, by attempting too many of those significant distinctions, which are only natural and proper when the mind remains in its ordinary state, and in entire possession of its faculties. Passion requires the broadest and fullest manner possible. In fine, Mr. Dowton gave only the prosaic side of the character of Shylock, without the poetical colouring which belongs to it and is the essence of tragic acting. Mr. Lovegrove was admirable in Launcelot Gobbo. The scene between him and Wewitzer, as Old Gobbo, was one of the richest we have seen for a long time. Pope was respectable as Antonio. Mr. Penley's Gratiano was more remarkable for an appearance of folly than of gaiety.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL.

Covent-Garden, Oct. 14, 1815.

Why can we not always be young, and seeing the School for Scandal? This play used to be one of our great theatrical treats in our early play-going days. What would we not give to see it once more, as it was then acted, and with the same feelings with which we saw it then? Not one of our old favourites is left, except little Simmons, who only served to put us in mind more strongly of what we have lost! Genteel comedy cannot be acted at present. Little Moses, the money-lender, was within a hair's-breadth of being the only person in the piece who had the appearance or manners of a gentleman. There was a *retenu* in the conduct of his cane and hat, a precision of dress and costume, an idiomatic peculiarity of tone, an exact propriety both in his gestures and sentiments, which reminded us of the good old times

when every one belonged to a marked class in society, and maintained himself in his characteristic absurdities by a *cheveux-de-fris* of prejudices, forms, and ceremonies. Why do our patriots and politicians rave for ever about the restoration of the good old times? Till they can persuade the beaux in Bond-street to resume their swords and bag-wigs, they will never succeed.

When we go to see a Comedy of the past age acted on the modern stage, we too almost begin to "cast some longing, lingering looks behind," at the departed sword-knots and toupees of the age of Louis XIV. We never saw a play more completely vulgarised in the acting than this. What shall we say of FAWCETT, who played Sir Peter Teazle with such formidable breadth of shoulders and strength of lungs? Or to Mrs. DOBBS, who made such a pretty, insipid little rustic of Lady Teazle, shewing her teeth like the painted dolls in a peruke-maker's window? Or to Mrs. GIBBS, who converted the delicacy of Mrs. Candour into the coarseness of a bar-maid? Or to Mr. BLANCHARD, whose face looked so red, and his eyes so fierce in Old Crabtree, and who seemed to have mistaken one of his stable-boys for his nephew, Sir Benjamin? Or (not to speak it profanely) to Mr. YOUNG's Joseph Surface? Never was there a less prepossessing hypocrite. Mr. YOUNG, indeed, puts on a long,

disagreeable, whining face, but he does not hide the accomplished, plausible villain beneath it. JACK PALMER was the man. No one ever came so near the idea of what the women call "a fine man." With what an air he trod the stage!—With what pomp he handed Lady Teazle to a chair! With what elaborate duplicity he knelt to Maria! Mr. YOUNG ought never to condescend to play comedy, nor aspire to play tragedy. Sentimental pantomime is his forte. CHARLES KEMBLE made the best Charles Surface we have seen. He acted this difficult character (difficult because it requires a union of so many requisites, a good face and figure, easy manners, evident good nature, animation and sensibility) in such a way as to make it truly interesting and delightful. The only fault we can find with him is, that he was not well dressed.—Mrs. FAUCIT was respectable in Lady Sneerwell. Mr. TERRY, as Sir Oliver Surface, wore a great coat with yellow buttons. Mr. FARLEY, in Trip, had a large bouquet: and why should we refuse to do justice to Mr. CLAREMONT, who was dressed in black? The School for Scandal is one of the best Comedies in our language, (a language abounding in good Comedies), and it deserves either to be well acted, or not acted at all. The wit is inferior to CONGREVE's, and the allusions much coarser. Its great excellence is in the invention

of comic situations*, and the lucky contrast of different characters. The satirical conversation at Lady Sneerwell's, is an indifferent imitation of The Way of the World, and Sir Benjamin Backbite a foolish superfluity from the older comedy. He did not need the aid of Mr. Tokeley to make him ridiculous. We have already spoken well of this actor's talents for low humour, but if he wishes to remain on the establishment, we are afraid he must keep in the kitchen.

* The scene where the screen falls and discovers Lady Teazle, is without a rival. Perhaps the discovery is delayed rather too long.

MRS. ALSOP'S ROSALIND.

October 22, 1815.

A LADY of the name of ALSOP, a daughter of Mrs. JORDAN (by a former husband), has appeared at Covent-Garden Theatre, in the character of Rosalind. Not only the circumstance of her relationship to that excellent actress, but the accounts in the papers, raised our curiosity and expectations very high. We were unwillingly disappointed. The truth is, Mrs. ALSOP is a very nice little woman, who acts her part very sensibly and cleverly, and with a certain degree of arch humour, but "no more like her mother than we to Hercules." When we say this, we mean no disparagement to this lady's talents, who is a real acquisition to the stage in correct and chaste acting, but simply to prevent comparisons, which can only end in disappointment. Mrs. ALSOP would make a better Celia than Rosalind. Mrs. JORDAN'S

excellences were all natural to her. It was not as an actress but as herself, that she charmed every one. Nature had formed her in her most prodigal humour: and when nature is in the humour to make a woman all that is delightful, she does it most effectually. Mrs. JORDAN was the same in all her characters, and inimitable in all of them, because there was no one else like her. Her face, her tones, her manner were irresistible. Her smile had the effect of sunshine, and her laugh did one good to hear it. Her voice was eloquence itself: it seemed as if her heart was always at her mouth. She was all gaiety, openness, and good-nature. She rioted in her fine animal spirits, and gave more pleasure than any other actress, because she had the greatest spirit of enjoyment in herself. Her Nell—but we will not tantalize ourselves or our readers. Mrs. ALSOP has nothing luxurious about her, and Mrs. JORDAN was nothing else. Her voice is clear and articulate, but not rich or flowing. In person she is small, and her face is not prepossessing. Her delivery of the speeches was correct and excellent as far as it went, but without much richness or power. Lively good sense is what she really possesses. She also sung the Cuckoo Song very pleasingly.

CHARLES KEMBLE made an interesting Orlando. Mr. YOUNG spoke the "Seven Ages" with propriety, and some effect. Mr. FAWCETT's

Touchstone was decent; and Mrs. GIBBS in Audrey, the very thing itself.

Mrs. MARDYN appeared at Drury-Lane Theatre in the play of The Will. We like her better than ever. She has still an exuberance in her manner and action, which might be spared. She almost *dances* the character. She is, or she looks, very handsome; is perfectly well made, and has a very powerful voice, of which she makes full use. With a little more elegance, a little more decorum, a little more restraint upon the display of her charms, she would be the most fascinating comic actress on the stage. We cannot express the only fault we have to find with her better than by saying, that we think her manner was perfectly in character in her boy's clothes. The scene with Deborah, where she was frightened by the supposed ghost, had wonderful effect. Mr. WALLACK played the young tutor as if he had been chaplain to a bishop. LOVEGROVE's humour in the old steward was feeble: it would not reach the galleries.

JOHN DU BART.

October 28, 1815.

John Du Bart is said to have made a great noise in his life-time; but it was nothing to the noise he makes at present at Covent-Garden Theatre, with his good ship Fame, and his gallant son Francis. We very much doubt, whether the vessel in which the great John forced his way out of Dunkirk harbour, was equal in size to the one in which Mr. Farley pipes all hands on board, and assaults the chandeliers and side-boxes of the Theatre-Royal. The ladies, like so many Andromedas, were thrown into evident consternation at the approach of this sea-monster. To what a degree of perfection the useful and elegant arts must have been carried in a country, where a real ship, as large as the life, can be brought on the stage, to the amazement and confusion of the audience! Speaking within compass, the man

of war which is now got up at Covent-Garden, is full as large as any of the flotilla which last year ploughed the bosom of the Serpentine River, and the sea-fight with which the Managers have favoured us before Christmas, is as interesting as that which took place in Hyde Park, between the English and American squadrons, under the tasteful direction of the Prince Regent. We pronounce this the most nonsensical farce (with the exception perhaps of the one just alluded to) we were ever present at. The utmost that the poet or the mechanist could have aspired to, must have been to produce the effects of a first sea-voyage. There lay the ship of John Du Bart for half an hour, rocking about on crape waves, with the sun rising on one side, and night coming on in a thunder-storm on the other, guns firing, and the orchestra playing; Mr. FARLEY on board, bawling himself hoarse, looking like the master of a Dutch squabber, or still more like the figure at the mast-head; Miss BOOTH as busy as she could make herself; Mr. TREBY and Mr. TRUMAN doing nothing; Mr. HAMERTON with a hat and feathers, as the Crown Prince of Poland; Mr. TOKELY very much at home drinking punch, and Mr. LISTON (the only sensible man on board) wishing himself in any other situation. If any thing were wanting to complete the dizziness of brain produced by all this, it was sup-

plied by the music of Mr. Bishop, who kept firing a perpetual broadside on the ears of the audience. From the overture to the finale, we heard nothing but

"Guns, drums, trumpets, blunderbuss, and thunder!"

Never since the invention of French Operas was there such an explosion of dissonant sounds. If this is music, then the clashing of bells, the letting off of rockets and detonating balls, or the firing a pistol close at your ear on an illumination night, is music. John Du Bart is taken from the French; and from the plot and sentiments, it is not difficult to guess the date of the French piece. It turns upon the preference due to an elected over an hereditary prince; and the chief actors are made to utter such sentiments as this, that "treason consists in supporting a monarch on the throne in opposition to the voice of the people." We wonder it is suffered to be acted—since *the hundred days* are over!

THE BEGGAR'S OPERA.

Nov. 4, 1815.

We are glad to announce another interesting Polly at Drury-Lane Theatre, in the person of Miss Nash, from the Theatre-Royal, Bath. We are glad of every thing that facilitates the frequent representation of that inimitable play, the Beggar's Opera, which unites those two good things, sense and sound, in a higher degree than any other performance on the English or (or as far as we know) on any other stage. It is to us the best proof of the good sense as well as real delicacy of the British public, to see the most beautiful women in the boxes and the most veteran critics in the pit, whenever it is acted. All sense of humanity must be lost before the Beggar's Opera can cease to fill the mind with delight and admiration.

Miss Nash is tall, elegantly formed, in the bloom of youth, and with a very pretty face.

Her voice has great sweetness, flexibility, and depth. Her execution is scientific, but gracefully simple; and she sang the several songs with equal taste and feeling. Her action, though sufficiently chaste and correct, wanted ease and spirit, so that the general impression left on the spectator's imagination was that of a very beautiful alabaster figure which had been taught to sing. She was greeted in the most encouraging manner on her first appearance, and rapturously applauded throughout. Indeed the songs and the music are so exquisite in themselves, that if given with their genuine characteristic simplicity, they cannot fail to delight the most insensible ear. The songs to which she gave most sweetness and animation were those beginning, "But he so teazed me" —"Why how now, saucy Jade"—and "Cease your funning." Her mode of executing the last was not certainly so delightful as the way in which Miss STEPHENS sings it, but it was still infinitely delightful. Her low notes are particularly fine. They have a deep, mellow richness, which we have never heard before in a female voice. The sound is like the murmuring of bees.

Miss KELLY played Lucy, and we need hardly add, that she played it well. She is a charming little vixen: has the most agreeable pout in the

world, and the best-humoured smile; shews all the insolence of lively satisfaction, and when she is in her airs, the blood seems to tingle at her fingers' ends. Her expression of triumph when Macheath goes up to her rival, singing "Tol de rol lol," and her vexation and astonishment when he turns round upon her in the same manner, were admirable. Her acting in this scene was encored; that is to say, Mr. COOKE's song was encored for the sake of the acting. She is the best Lucy we have seen, except Mrs. CHARLES KEMBLE, who, though she did not play the part more naturally, did it with a higher spirit and greater *gusto*.

Of Mr. T. COOKE's Macheath, we cannot say any thing favourable. Indeed, we do not know any actor on the stage who is enough of the fine gentleman to play it. Perhaps the elder KEMBLE might, but then he is no singer! It would be an experiment for Mr. KEAN: but we don't think he could do it. This is a paradox; but we will explain. As close a resemblance, then, as the dress of the ladies in the private boxes bears to that of the ladies in the boxes which are not private, so nearly should the manners of GAY's Macheath resemble those of the fine gentleman. Mr. HARLEY's Filch is not good. Filch is a serious, contemplative, conscientious character. This SIMMONS perfectly understands,

as he does every character that he plays. He sings the song, "'Tis woman that seduces all mankind," as if he had a pretty girl in one eye, and the gallows in the other. Mr. HARLEY makes a joke of it. Mrs. SPARKES'S Mrs. Peachum we hardly think so good as Mrs. DAVENPORT'S.

MUNDEN spoils Peachum, by lowering the character into broad farce. He does not utter a single word without a nasal twang, and a distortion of his face and body. Peachum is an old rogue, but not a buffoon. Mr. DOWTON'S Lockitt was good, but it is difficult to play this part after EMERY, who in the hard, dry, and impenetrable, has no rival. The scene where DOWTON and MUNDEN quarrel, and exchange wigs in the scuffle, was the best. They were admirably dressed. A hearty old gentleman in the pit, one of the old school, enthusiastically called out, "Hogarth, by G—d!" The ladies in the scene at the tavern with Macheath were genteeler than usual. This we were pleased to see; for a great deal depends on the casting of that scene. How GAY must have chuckled, when he found it once fairly over, and the house in a roar! They leave it out at Covent-Garden, from the systematic attention which is paid there to the morals of the town!

MISS O'NEILL'S ELWINA.

Nov. 18, 1815.

DURING the last week Miss O'NEILL has condescended to play the character of Elwina, in Miss HANNAH MORE's tragedy of Percy. "Although this production," says a critic in the Times, "like every other of the excellent and enlightened author, affords equal pleasure and instruction in the perusal, we are not sure that it was ever calculated to obtain very eminent success upon the stage. The language is undoubtedly classical and flowing; the sentiment characteristically natural and pure; the fable uninterrupted; the catastrophe mournful; and the moral of unquestionable utility and truth. With all these requisites to dramatic fortune, the tragedy of Percy does not so strongly rivet the attention, as some other plays less free from striking faults, and composed by writers of far less distinguished talent. Though the versifi-

cation be sufficiently musical, and in many passages conspicuous for nerve as well as cadence, there is no splendid burst of imagery, nor lofty strain of poetical inspiration. Taste and intelligence have decked their lines in every grace of sculptured beauty: we miss but the presence of that Promethean fire, which could bid the statue "speak." It may be objected, moreover, to this drama, that its incidents are too few, and too little diversified. The grand interest which belongs to the unlooked-for preservation of Percy's life, is, perhaps, too soon elicited and expended: and if we mistake not, there is room for doubting whether, at length, he fairly met his death, or was ensnared once more by some unworthy treachery of Douglas. Neither do we think the passions which are called into play by the solemn events of a history so calamitous, have been very minutely traced, intensely coloured, or powerfully illustrated. We have a general impression that Douglas is racked by jealousy—Elwina by grief—and Percy by disappointment. But we fain would have the home touches of SHAKESPEAR."

Thus far the Times critic: from all which it appears that Miss HANNAH MORE is not like SHAKESPEAR. The writer afterwards tries his hand at a comparison between Miss MORE and VIRGIL; and the result, after due deliberation, is, that VIRGIL was the wiser man. The part,

however, to which the learned commentator has the most decided objection, is that "where Elwina steps out of her way to preach rather a lengthy sermon to her father, against war in general, as offensive to the Prince of Peace."—Now if this writer had thought proper, he might have discovered that the whole play is "a lengthy sermon," without poetry or interest, and equally deficient in "sculptured grace, and Promethean fire."—We should not have made these remarks, but that the writers in the above paper have a greater knack than any others, of putting a parcel of tall opaque words before them, to blind the eyes of their readers, and hoodwink their own understandings. There is one short word which might be aptly inscribed on its swelling columns—it is the word which BURCHELL applies to the conversation of some high-flown female critics in the Vicar of Wakefield.

But to have done with this subject. We shall not readily forgive Miss HANNAH MORE's heroine Elwina, for having made us perceive what we had not felt before, that there is a considerable degree of manner and monotony in Miss O'NEILL's acting. The peculiar excellence which has been ascribed to Miss O'NEILL (indeed over every other actress) is that of *faultless nature*. Mrs. SIDDONS's acting is said to have greater grandeur, to have possessed loftier flights of passion and imagination; but then it is objected,

that it was not a pure imitation of nature. Miss O'Neill's recitation is indeed nearer the common standard of level speaking, as her person is nearer the common size, but we will venture to say that there is as much a tone, a certain stage sing-song in her delivery as in Mrs. Siddons's. Through all the tedious speeches of this play, she preserved the same balanced artificial cadence, the same melancholy tone, as if her words were the continued echo of a long-drawn sigh. There is the same pitch-key, the same alternation of sad sounds in almost every line. We do not insist upon perfection in any one, nor do we mean to decide how far this intonation may be proper in tragedy; but we contend, that Miss O'Neill does not in general speak in a natural tone of voice, nor as people speak in conv'sation. Her great excellence is extreme natural sensibility; that is, she perfectly conceives and expresses what would be generally felt by the female mind in the extraordinary and overpowering situations in which she is placed. In truth, in beauty, and in that irresistible pathos, which goes directly to the heart, she has at present no equal, and can have no superior. There were only one or two opportunities for the display of her delightful powers in the character of Elwina, but of these she made the fullest use. The expression of mute grief, when she hears of the death of Percy, in

the last act, was as fine as possible: nor could any thing be more natural, more beautiful or affecting, than the manner in which she receives his scarf, and hurries out with it, tremulously clasping it to her bosom. It was one of those moments of still, and breathless passion, in which the tongue is silent, while the heart breaks. We did not approve of her dying scene at all. It was a mere convulsive struggle for breath, the representation of a person in the act of suffocation—one of those agonies of human nature, which, as they do not appeal to the imagination, should not certainly be obtruded on the senses. Once or twice Miss O'Neill dropped her voice so low, and articulated so internally, that we gathered what she said rather from the motion of her lips, than from distinguishing the sound. This in Mr. Kean would be called extravagance. We were heartily glad when the play was over. From the very construction of the plot, it is impossible that any good can come of it till all the parties are dead; and when this catastrophe took place, the audience seemed perfectly satisfied.

WHERE TO FIND A FRIEND.

Nov. 25, 1815.

A NEW Comedy, entitled Where to find a Friend, and said to be from the pen of a Mr. LEIGH, has been brought out at Drury-Lane Theatre. The Dramatis Personæ are as follows:

General Torrington	Mr. BARTLEY.
Sir Harry Moreden	Mr. WALLACK.
Heartly	Mr. DOWTON.
Young Bustle	Mr. KNIGHT.
Barney	Mr. JOHNSTONE.
Tim	Mr. OXBERRY.
Lady Moreden	Mrs. DAVISON.
Maria	Miss KELLY.
Mrs. Bustle	Mrs. SPARKS.

The story is not easily told, for it is a story almost destitute of events. Sir Harry Moreden has been for some years married to an heiress, a woman of exemplary principles and amiable feelings; but who, as it appears, through no other misconduct than a little playful gaiety of

manner, has so far provoked the capricious and irritable temper of her husband, that he writes off to General Torrington, her guardian, gravely proposing a separation. This letter brings the General down from London, in order to learn from the Baronet his real cause of quarrel with his wife; and a singular conversation ensues, in which, to every conjecture of the General's as to the nature of Lady M.'s offences, the unaccountable husband answers in the negative, leaving it to the discernment of her guardian to find out the actual source of his disquietude. This, it appears, in the course of the play, is a certain fashionable levity and sportiveness of manner, with which it is rather extraordinary that Sir Harry should be displeased, as another objection on which he sometimes dwells is the rusticity of his wife's taste, in not having any inclination for the dissipation and frivolities of a town life. Some improbable scenes are however introduced to explain the merits of this matrimonial question, in which the studied levity on one side is contrasted with the unconscious violence on the other, until at length Lady Moreden, hearing from her guardian that her husband is much embarrassed in his circumstances, and almost on the point of ruin, reproaches herself with her thoughtless habit of tormenting him; and prevails upon the General to concur with her in applying her own large fortune, left

to her separately by her father's will, to the relief of her husband's distresses: at the moment when Sir Harry is complaining of his not knowing "where to find a friend," all his applications to those whom he had considered such having proved unsuccessful, her guardian introduces his wife to him, which produces the reconciliation between them, and gives rise to the title of the play.

In the progress and developement of this story there is very little to interest or surprise: the sentimental part of the comedy is founded on the story of Heartly, whose daughter Maria has run away from him, and been privately married to a man of fashion, but who having, for family reasons, enjoined secresy upon her in his absence abroad, subjects her, in her father's eyes, to the supposed disgrace of a criminal connection. Old Heartly retires into the country in a melancholy state of mind, and Maria, finding herself unexpectedly near to his cottage, determines to throw herself upon his forgiveness, prevails upon an honest old servant to admit her to his presence, supplicates for pardon, and is again received into his affections. This reconciliation is not well brought about. Her seeking the interview with her father through the connivance of a servant, after the repeated rejection of every application to his tenderness, and when she has an advocate in General Torring-

ton, an old friend of Heartly's, who has undertaken to bring about a reconciliation, is not exceedingly probable. After her clandestine introduction by the servant, the reconciliation is first effected between Heartly and Maria, on the supposition of her guilt, and is afterwards acted as it were twice over, when the sight of a ring on her finger leads to the discovery of her innocence. The comedy opens with the arrival of Maria at a country inn, near Moreden-hall, kept by the widow Bustle. The introductory scene between this veteran lady of the old school, and her son Jack Bustle, who is infected with the modern cant of humanity, and is besides very indecorous in his manners, is tediously long. Maria's depositing the hundred pounds in the hands of Mrs. Bustle is a gratuitous improbability; and it is with some difficulty that the notes are retrieved for the use of the right owner by the busy interference of Mr. Jack Bustle and the generosity of Mr. Barney O'Mulchesen, an honest Irishman, who at the beginning of the play is the ostler, but at the end of it, as he himself informs us, becomes "the mistress of the Black Lion."

JOHNSTONE gave great spirit, and an appearance of cordial good humour, to this last character. He has a great deal of "the milk of human kindness" in all his acting. There is a rich genial suavity of manner, a laughing confidence,

a fine oily impudence about him, which must operate as a saving grace to any character he is concerned in, and would make it difficult to hiss him off the stage. In any other hands we think Mr. Barney O'Mulchesen would have stood some chance of being damned. OXBERRY's Tim was excellent: in those kind of loose dangling characters, in which the limbs do not seem to hang to the body nor the body to the mind, in which he has to display meanness and poverty of spirit together with a natural love of good fellowship and good cheer, there is nobody equal to OXBERRY. His scene with DOWTON, his master, who comes home, and finds him just returning from the fair, from the passionateness of the master and the meekness of the man, had a very comic effect. This was the best scene in the play, and the only one in it, which struck us as containing any thing like originality in the conception of humour and character. Of Mrs. DAVISON's Lady Moreden, we cannot speak favourably, if we are to speak what we think. Her acting is said to have much playfulness about it; if so, it is *horse-play*.

A singularity in the construction of the scenes of this comedy is, that they are nearly an uninterrupted series of tête-à-têtes: the personages of the drama regularly come on in couples, and the two persons go off the stage to make room for two others to come on, just like the proces-

sion to Noah's Ark. Perhaps this principle might be improved upon, by making an entire play of nothing but soliloquies.

Covent-Garden.

CYMON, an opera, by GARRICK, was brought out on Monday. It is not very interesting, either in itself or the music. Mr. DURUSET played Cymon very naturally, though the compliment is, perhaps, somewhat equivocal. Miss STEPHENS looked very prettily in Sylvia; but the songs had not any great effect: "Sweet Passion of Love" was the best of them.

"It is silly sooth, and dallies with the innocence of love."

Mrs. LISTON, who played a little old woman, was encored in the burlesque song, "Now I am seventy-two." Mr. LISTON's Justice Dorus is a rich treat: his face is certainly a prodigious invention in physiognomy.

MISS O'NEILL'S BELVIDERA.

Dec. 9, 1815.

Miss O'Neill repeated her usual characters last week. We saw her in Belvidera, and were disappointed. We do not think she plays it so well as she did last year. We thought her representation of it then as near perfection as possible; and her present acting we think chargeable in many instances, with affectation and extravagance. She goes into the two extremes of speaking so loud as to "split the ears of the groundlings" and so low as not to be heard. She has (or we mistake) been taking a bad lesson of Mr. Kean: in our opinion, the excellences of genius are not communicable. A second-rate actor may learn of a first; but all imitation in the latter must prove a source of error: for the power with which great talent works, can only be regulated by its own suggestions and the force of nature. The bodily energy which

Mr. KEAN exhibits cannot be transferred to female characters, without making them disgusting instead of impressive. Miss O'NEILL during the two last acts of Belvidera, is in a continual convulsion. But the intention of tragedy is to exhibit mental passion and not bodily agony, or the last only as a necessary concomitant of the former. Miss O'NEILL clings so long about Jaffier, and with such hysterical violence, before she leaps upon his neck and calls for the fatal blow, that the connection of the action with the sentiment is lost in the pantomime exhibition before us. We are not fastidious; nor do we object to having the painful worked up with the catastrophe to the utmost pitch of human suffering; but we must object to a constant recurrence of such extreme agony, as a convenient commonplace or trick to bring down thunders of applause. Miss O'NEILL twice, if we remember, seizes her forehead with her clenched fists, making a hissing noise through her teeth, and twice is thrown into a fit of agonized choking. Neither is her face fine enough in itself not to become unpleasant by such extreme and repeated distortion. Miss O'NEILL's freedom from mannerism was her great charm, and we should be sorry to see her fall into it. Mr. C. KEMBLE's Jaffier had very considerable effect. Mr. YOUNG's Pierre is his best character.

A new Farce was brought out here on Monday week, the title of which is What's a Man of Fashion? a question which it does not solve. A young lady (Miss MATHEWS) is left a fortune by her father, on condition of her marrying a man of fashion within a year of his death. Her aunt (Mrs. DAVENPORT) is left her guardian, and locks her up to prevent her marrying any one, that the fortune may devolve to her. Old Project (personated by FAWCETT) is instigated by the young lady, through the key-hole of the door where she is locked up, to find her a husband who shall also be a man of fashion; and just as the old gentleman, who is a very strange mixture of the sailor, fox-hunter, and Bond-street lounger, has undertaken this laudable task, he meets his nephew (Mr. JONES), whom he fixes upon as the candidate for the young lady and for fifty thousand pounds. The whole business of the piece arises out of the attempts of Old Project to bring them together, and the schemes of the aunt to prevent the conclusion of the marriage before the expiration of the year, that is, before it strikes twelve o'clock at night. After many trifling and improbable adventures, Old Project and his nephew succeed. The clock strikes twelve, but the man of fashion and his mistress have been married a few minutes before, though nobody knows how. We do not think this farce a bit better than some we have lately noticed.

The author seems to have sat down to write it without a plot. There is neither dialogue nor character in it, nor has it any thing to make it amusing, but the absurdity of the incidents.

We have seen Miss O'NEILL in the Orphan, and almost repent of what we have said above. Her Monimia is a piece of acting as beautiful as it is affecting. We never wish to see it acted otherwise or better. She is the Orphan that ORWAY drew.

> "With pleas'd attention 'midst his scenes we find
> "Each glowing thought that warms the female mind;
> "Each melting sigh and every tender tear,
> "The lover's wishes, and the virgin's fear,
> "His every strain the Smiles and Graces own."

This idea of the character, which never leaves the mind in reading the play, was delightfully represented on the stage. Miss O'NEILL did not once overstep the limits of propriety, and was interesting in every part. Her conversation with the page was delicately familiar and playful. Her death was judiciously varied, and did not affect the imagination less, because it gave no shock to the senses. Her greatest effort, however, was in the scene with Polydore, where she asks him, "Where did you

rest last night?" and where she falls senseless on the floor at his answer. The breathless expectation, the solemn injunction, the terror which the discovery strikes to her heart as if she had been struck with lightning, had an irresistible effect. Nothing could be pourtrayed with greater truth and feeling. We liked CHARLES KEMBLE'S Castalio not much, and Mr. CONWAY'S Polydore not at all. It is impossible that this gentleman should become an actor, unless he could take "a cubit from his stature." Mr. YOUNG'S Chamont was quite as good as the character deserves.

MR. KEAN'S appearance at Drury-Lane on Tuesday, in the Duke Aranza, in the Honey Moon, excited considerable expectations in the public. Our own were not fulfilled. We think this the least brilliant of all his characters. It was Duke and no Duke. It had severity without dignity; and was deficient in ease, grace, and gaiety. He played the feigned character as if it were a reality. Now we believe that a spirit of raillery should be thrown over the part, so as to carry off the gravity of the imposture. There is in Mr. KEAN an infinite variety of talent, with a certain monotony of genius. He has not the same ease in doing common things that he has energy on great occasions. We seldom entirely lose sight of his Richard,

and to a certain degree, in all his acting, "*he still plays the dog.*" His dancing was encored. GEORGE II. encored GARRICK in the *Minuet de la Cour:* Mr. KEAN's was not like court dancing. It had more alacrity than ease.

THE MERCHANT OF BRUGES.

Dec. 16, 1815.

The Merchant of Bruges; or, The Beggars' Bush, altered from Beaumont and Fletcher, was brought out at Drury-Lane on Thursday, with great preparation, applause, and effect. Contrary, we believe, to Green-room expectation, it answered completely. This, assuredly, is not a classical drama; but the spirit of poetry constantly peeps out from beneath the rags, and patches, and miserable disguise, in which it is clothed. Where the eye was most offended by the want of costume, songs and music came to its relief. The airs selected by Mr. T. Cooke were admirably adapted to the situations, and we need not remind the critical reader, that the lyrical effusions in Beaumont and Fletcher are master-pieces in their kind. They are exactly fitted to be either "said or sung" under the green-wood tree. One or two

of these were sung separately, with a good deal of sweetness and characteristic *naiveté*, by Miss L. KELLY, who is one of the supposed beggars, but a princess in disguise. Either we mistook certain significant intimations, or she wished to make this appear before the proper time. One of the oddest transformations in the Beggars' Bush, was, that it inspired Mr. HOLLAND with no small degree of animation and fancy; for he depicted the worthy Clause, who is at the same time the King of the Beggars, the Father of the Merchant of Bruges, and the old Earl of Flanders, inimitably well.

Again, Mr. OXBERRY and HARLEY were most respectable Beggars, and had their cues perfect (which was more than Mr. POPE had in the prologue); Mr. KEAN topped his part as the Merchant-Earl, Mr. MUNDEN was not far behind him as the drunken Burgo-master, and Mr. S. PENLEY, Mr. RAE, and Mr. RAYMOND, served to fill the stage. The scenes from which this play derived its interest, and which both for sentiment and situation were admirable, are those in which Mr. KEAN vindicates his character as a Merchant and his love for Gertrude against the arrogant assumptions of her uncle (RAYMOND), and disarms the latter in the fight. His retort upon the noble baron, who accuses him of being a barterer of pepper and sugar, "that every petty lord lived upon his rents or

the sale of his beves, his poultry, his milk and his butter," made a forcible appeal to John Bull, nor did the manner in which MUNDEN, who is bottle-holder on the occasion, vociferated, "Don't forget butter," take away from the effect. The whole of this scene is (if not in the best) in the most peculiar and striking manner of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER. It is the very petulance of youthful ardour and aspiring self-opinion, defying and taunting the frigid prejudices of age and custom. If Mr. KEAN's voice failed him, his expression and his action did full justice to the heroic spirit and magnanimity of conception of the poet, where he says to his mistress, after depriving his antagonist of his sword, "Within these arms thou art safe as in a wall of brass," and again, folding her to his breast, exclaims, "Come, kiss me, love," and afterwards rising in his extravagant importunity, "Come, say before all these, say that thou lov'st me." We do not think any of the German dramatic paradoxes come up to this in spirit, and in acting as it were up to the feeling of the moment, irritated by a triumph over long-established and insolent pretension. The scene between Mr. KEAN and Gertrude (Mrs. HORN), where he is in a manner distracted between his losses and his love, had great force and feeling. We have seen him do much the same thing before. There is a

very fine pulsation in the veins of his forehead on these occasions, an expression of nature which we do not remember in any other actor. One of the last scenes, in which *Clause* brings in the money-bags to the creditors, and KEAN bends forward pointing to them, and MUNDEN after him, repeating the same attitude, but caricaturing it, was a perfect *coup-de-théatre*. The last scene rather disappointed our expectations; but the whole together went off admirably, and every one went away satisfied.

The story of the Merchant of Bruges is founded on the usurped authority of Woolmar, as Earl of Flanders, to the exclusion of Gerald, the rightful heir, and his infant son Floris; the latter of whom, on his father being driven out by the usurper, has been placed with a rich merchant of Bruges; whilst the father, with his infant daughter, takes refuge among a band of Beggars, whose principal resort is in a wood near the town of Bruges. Young Floris is brought up by the merchant as his own son; and on the death of his protector, whom he considers as his real father, succeeds to his property, and becomes the principal merchant in Bruges. Gerald, in the mean time, is elected King of the Beggars; and, by the influence which his authority gives him over the fraternity, he is enabled to assist his son with a large sum of

money at a time when he is on the verge of bankruptcy, owing to the non-arrival of several vessels richly laden, and which are detained by contrary winds. This circumstance gives the supposed Beggar considerable influence over the actions of his son, who declares himself ready to pay him the duties of a son, without being at all suspicious that it is indeed his real parent whom he is thus obeying; and Gerald, determining to reveal to his son the mystery of his birth, appoints an interview with him at midnight, near the Beggars' Bush, in the Forest. In the mean time Woolmar, having learnt that Gerald and Floris, whom he supposes dead, are still living, and that Gerald is concealed amongst the Beggars, goes with a troop of horse at midnight to the Beggars' Bush, for the purpose of surprising him. His plan is, however, circumvented by Hubert, a nobleman at the court of Woolmar, but who is secretly attached to the right heir. Hubert conveys intelligence of the intended attempt of Woolmar to Gerald, and a strong band of the Beggars are armed, and set in readiness to seize him on his entering a particular part of the forest, to which he is enticed by Hubert, under pretence of leading him to the spot where Gerald is concealed. Here they arrive just at the time Floris, by appointment, meets his father Gerald. Woolmar

falls into the trap prepared for him, and is, with his principal confidant, Hemskirk, secured. An explanation takes place, and Gerald resigning his pretensions to his son, Floris, the Merchant is restored to the possession of the earldom of Flanders, and Woolmar, the usurping Earl, is banished for life.

SMILES AND TEARS.

Dec. 23, 1815.

A NEW piece in five acts, called Smiles and Tears; or the Widow's Stratagem, has been produced, with very considerable success, at Covent-Garden Theatre. The Dramatis Personæ are:

Mr. Fitzharding	Mr. YOUNG.
Sir Henry Chomley	Mr. C. KEMBLE.
Colonel O'Donolan	Mr. JONES.
Mr. Stanley	Mr. FAWCETT.
Mr. Delaval	Mr. ABBOTT.
Lady Emily	Mrs. C. KEMBLE.
Mrs. Belmore	Mrs. FAUCIT.
Miss Fitzharding	Miss FOOTE.

The plot is as follows: Lady Emily, a young widow supposed to possess every amiable quality of body and mind, has for her intimate friend Mrs. Belmore, who is also a widow, and engaged in a law-suit with Sir Henry Chomley, by which she is likely to lose her whole fortune.

Sir Henry has by chance met Lady Emily at a masquerade, where he has become deeply enamoured of her figure, wit, and vivacity, without having ever seen her face; and having at length obtained information who she is, and where she resides, writes to her, soliciting an interview, and declaring the impression which her person and conversation had made on his heart. Lady Emily being herself sincerely attached to Colonel O'Donolan, determines to convert the passion of Sir Henry to the advantage of her friend Mrs. Belmore; and as they have never seen each other, to introduce Mrs. Belmore to Sir Henry as Lady Emily: but, aware that Mrs. Belmore will not receive Sir Henry's addresses, whom she regards as her enemy, on account of the law-suit between them, she writes to Sir Henry that she will admit his visits, but that it must, for particular reasons, be under the assumed name of Grenville; and as Mr. Grenville, she prevails on Mrs. Belmore to receive him in the name of Lady Emily, assigning as her reason for this request, her fear of seeing him herself, lest the Colonel's jealousy should be excited. Several interviews take place between Sir Henry and Mrs. Belmore, who conceive so warm an attachment for each other, under their assumed characters, that when the widow's stratagem is discovered, they gladly agree to put an end to their law-suit by a matrimonial union. The other, and the

most afflicting part of the plot, turns on a stratagem conceived by Lady Emily (who it must be allowed is fruitful in stratagems), to restore Fitzharding to his reason, and his daughter to his affections, both of which had been lost by the dishonourable conduct of Delaval, who had first seduced, and then deserted the lovely and unsuspecting Cicely Fitzharding.

All that is particularly good in this play arises from the mistakes and surprises produced by the double confusion of the names of the principal characters concerned in the Widow's Stratagem. The scene between CHARLES KEMBLE and JONES, when the former acquaints him with his success with the supposed Lady Emily, and in which JONES testifies a resentment against his rival as violent as it is in reality groundless, was in the true spirit of comedy. JONES's scene with the Widow Belmore (Mrs. FAUCIT), in which the mystery is cleared up to him, is also conceived and executed with great spirit and effect. The character which JONES represents, an Irish Colonel, is one of the most misplaced and absurd we remember to have seen, and the only excuse for whose blunders, rudeness, officiousness, and want of common sense, is (as far as we could learn), that he is a countryman of Lord WELLINGTON. This is but an indifferent compliment to his Grace, and perhaps no great one to Colonel O'Donolan. There were two direct

clap-traps aimed directly at the Duke's popularity, which did not take. The truth, we suspect, is, that his Lordship is not very popular at present in either of his two great characters, as liberator of Ferdinand VII. or as keeper of Louis XVIII. CHARLES KEMBLE played the part of Sir Henry Chomley with that gentlemanly ease, gaiety, and good nature, which always gain him the entire favour of the audience in such characters. He indeed did as much for this play as if it had been his own. Mrs. FAUCIT played Mrs. Belmore exceedingly well. There was something that reminded us of a jointure and a view to a second match in her whole *look* and air. We cannot speak a word of praise of Mrs. C. KEMBLE's Lady Emily. Neither her person nor her manner at all suited the character, nor the description of it which is several times interlarded in the dialogue. Her walk is not the fine lady; she is nearly the worst actress we ever saw in the artificial *mimmine-pimmine* style of Miss FARREN. We hope she will discontinue such characters, and return to nature; or she will make us forget her Lucy Lockitt, or what we should hope never to forget, her acting in Julio in Deaf and Dumb.

There is a great deal of affectation of gentility, and a great deal of real indecorum, in the comic dialogue of this play. The tragic part is violent and vulgar in the extreme. Mr.

YOUNG is brought forward as a downright common madman, just broke loose from a madhouse at Richmond, and is going with a club to dash out the brains of his daughter, Miss FOOTE, and her infant. This infant is no other than a large wooden doll: it fell on the floor the other evening without receiving any hurt, at which the audience laughed. This dreadful interlude is taken, we suppose, from Mrs. OPIE'S tale of Father and Daughter, of which we thought never to have heard or seen any thing more. As the whole of this part is conceived without the smallest poetical feeling, so Mr. YOUNG did not contrive to throw one ray of genius over it. Miss FOOTE behaved throughout very prettily, dutifully and penitently; and in the last scene, where, to bring back her father's senses, she is made to stand in a frame and to represent her own portrait playing on the harp, she looked a perfect picture.

GEORGE BARNWELL.

Dec. 30, 1815.

GEORGE BARNWELL has been acted as usual at both Theatres during the Christmas week. Whether this is "a custom more honoured in the breach or the observance," we shall not undertake to decide. But there is one error on this subject which we wish to correct; which is, that its defects arise from its being too natural. It is one of the most improbable and purely arbitrary fictions we have ever seen. LILLO is by some people considered as a kind of natural SHAKESPEAR, and SHAKESPEAR as a poetical LILLO. We look upon SHAKESPEAR to have been a greater man than the Ordinary of Newgate; and we at the same time conceive that there is not any one of the stories in the Newgate Calendar so badly told as this tragedy of LILLO's. LILLO seems to have proceeded on the old Scotch proverb,

"The kirk is gude, and the gallows is gude."

He comes with his moral lessons and his terrible examples; a sermon in the morning and an execution at night; the tolling of the bell for Tyburn follows hard upon the bell that knolls to church. Nothing can be more virtuous or prudent than George Barnwell at the end of the first act, or a more consummate rogue and fool than he is at the beginning of the second. This play is a piece of wretched cant; it is an insult on the virtues and the vices of human nature; it supposes that the former are relinquished and the others adopted without common sense or reason, for the sake of a Christmas catastrophe, of a methodistical moral. The account of a young unsuspecting man being seduced by the allurements of an artful prostitute is natural enough, and something might have been built on this foundation, but all the rest is absurd, and equally senseless as poetry or prose. It is a caricature on the imbecility of goodness, and of the unprovoked and gratuitous depravity of vice. SHAKESPEAR made "these odds more even;" that is, he drew from nature, and did not drag the theatre into the service of the conventicle. George Barnwell first robs his master at Milwood's instigation: (this lady has the merit of being what Dr. JOHNSON would have called "a good hater"). He then, being in want of money, proceeds to rob and murder somebody; and in the way of deliberation and

selection fixes upon his uncle, his greatest friend and benefactor, as if he were the only man in the world who carried a purse. He therefore goes to seek him in his solitary walks, where, good man, he is reading a book on the shortness and uncertainty of human life, bursting out, as he reads, into suitable comments, which, as his ungracious nephew, who watches behind him in crape, says, shews that "he is the fitter for heaven." Well, he turns round, and sees that he is way-laid by some one; but his nephew, at the sight of his benign and well-known aspect, drops the pistol, but presently after stabs him to the heart. This is no sooner effected without remorse or pity, but the instant it is over, he loses all thought of the purpose which had instigated him to the act, the securing his property (not that it appears he had any about him), and this raw, desperate convert to vice returns to his mistress, to say that he had committed the murder, and omitted the robbery. On being questioned as to the *proceeds* of so nefarious a business, our retrospective enthusiast asks, "Could he lay sacrilegious hands on the body he had just murdered?" to which his cooler and more rational accomplice replies, "That as he had robbed him of his life, which was no doubt precious to him, she did not see why he should not rifle his pockets of that which, being dead, could be of no farther use to him."

However, Barnwell makes such a noise with his virtue and his penitence, that she is alarmed for the consequences; and anticipating a discovery of the whole, calls in the constable, and gives up her companion as a measure of precaution. Her maid, however, who is her confidante, has been before-hand with her, and she is also taken into custody, and both are hanged. Such is the morality of this piece.

THE BUSY BODY.

Jan. 6, 1816.

The admirable Comedy of the Busy Body was brought out at Drury-Lane Theatre on Wednesday, for the purpose of introducing Mrs. Mardyn in Miranda. She acted the part very delightfully, and without at all overdoing it. We seem to regret her former luxuriance of manner, and think she might take greater liberties with the public, without offence. Though she has lost some of the heyday vivacity of her natural spirits, she looks as charmingly as ever.

Mr. Dowton's Gripe was not one of his best performances. It is very much a character of grimace, and Munden perhaps would do it better on this account, for he is the greatest caricaturist on the stage. It was the character in which he originally appeared. We never saw him in it, but in several parts we missed

his broad shining face, the orbicular rolling of his eye, and the alarming drop of his chin. Mr. Dowton, however, gave the whining tones and the dotage of fondness very well, and "his voice pipes and whistles in the sound, like second childishness." If any thing, he goes too far in this, and drawls out his ecstasies too much into the tabernacle sing-song.

Mr. Harley played Marplot in a very lively and amusing manner. He presented a very laughable picture of blundering vivacity and blank stupidity. This gentleman is the most *moveable* actor on the stage. He runs faster and stops shorter than any body else. There was but one fault in his delineation of the character. The officious Marplot is a gentleman, a foolish one, to be sure; but Harley played it like a footman. We observed also, that when Mr. Harley got very deserved applause by his manner of strutting, and sidling, and twisting himself about in the last scene, where he fights, he continued to repeat the same gestures over again, as if he had been *encored* by the audience.

We cannot close these remarks, without expressing the satisfaction which we received from this play. It is not so profound in wit or character as some other of the old Comedies, but it is nothing but bustle and gaiety from beginning to end. The plot never ceases. The

ingenuity of contrivance is admirable. The developement of the story is an uninterrupted series of what the French call *coups de theatre*, and the situations succeed one another like the changes of machinery in a pantomime. It is a true comic pantomime.

A lady of the name of BARNES has appeared in Desdemona at this Theatre. Her voice is powerful, her face is pretty, but her person is too *petite* and undignified for tragedy. Her conception of the part was good, and she gave to some of the scenes considerable feeling and effect; but who shall represent "the divine Desdemona?"

Mr. KEAN's Othello is his best character, and the highest effort of genius on the stage. We say this without any exception or reserve. Yet we wish it was better than it is. In parts, we think he rises as high as human genius can go: at other times, though powerful, the whole effort is thrown away in a wrong direction, and disturbs our idea of the character. There are some technical objections. Othello was tall; but that is nothing: he was black, but that is nothing. But he was not fierce, and that is every thing. It is only in the last agony of human suffering that he gives way to his rage

and his despair, and it is in working his noble nature up to that extremity, that SHAKESPEAR has shewn his genius and his vast power over the human heart. It was in raising passion to its height, from the lowest beginnings and in spite of all obstacles, in shewing the conflict of the soul, the tug and war between love and hatred, rage, tenderness, jealousy, remorse, in laying open the strength and the weaknesses of human nature, in uniting sublimity of thought with the anguish of the keenest woe, in putting in motion all the springs and impulses which make up this our mortal being, and at last blending them in that noble tide of deep and sustained passion, impetuous, but majestic, "that flows on to the Propontic and knows no ebb," that the great excellence of SHAKESPEAR lay. Mr. KEAN is in general all passion, all energy, all relentless will. He wants imagination, that faculty which contemplates events, and broods over feelings with a certain calmness and grandeur; his feelings almost always hurry on to action, and hardly ever repose upon themselves. He is too often in the highest key of passion, too uniformly on the verge of extravagance, too constantly on the rack. This does very well in certain characters, as Zanga or Bajazet, where there is merely a physical passion, a boiling of the blood to be expressed, but it is not so in the lofty-minded and generous Moor.

We make these remarks the more freely, because there were parts of the character in which Mr. KEAN shewed the greatest sublimity and pathos, by laying aside all violence of action. For instance, the tone of voice in which he delivered the beautiful apostrophe, "Then, oh, farewell!" struck on the heart like the swelling notes of some divine music, like the sound of years of departed happiness. Why not all so, or all that is like it? why not speak the affecting passage—"I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips"—why not speak the last speech, in the same manner? They are both of them, we do most strenuously contend, speeches of pure pathos, of thought, and feeling, and not of passion, venting itself in violence of action or gesture. Again, the look, the action, the expression of voice, with which he accompanied the exclamation, "Not a jot, not a jot," was perfectly heart-rending. His vow of revenge against Cassio, and his abandonment of his love for Desdemona, were as fine as possible. The whole of the third act had an irresistible effect upon the house, and indeed is only to be paralleled by the murder-scene in Macbeth. Mr. POPE's Iago was better acted than usual, but he does not look the character. Mr. HOLLAND's drunken scene was, as it always is, excellent.

A NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS.

Jan. 13, 1816.

MASSINGER's play of A New Way to Pay Old Debts, which has been brought out at Drury-Lane Theatre to introduce Mr. KEAN in the part of Sir Giles Overreach, must have afforded a rich treat to theatrical amateurs. There is something in a good play well acted, a peculiar charm, that makes us forget ourselves and all the world.

It has been considered as the misfortune of great talents for the stage, that they leave no record behind them except that of vague rumour, and that the genius of a great actor perishes with him, "leaving the world no copy." This is a misfortune, or at least a mortifying reflection, to actors; but it is, we conceive, an advantage to the stage. It leaves an opening to originality. The stage is always beginning anew; the candidates for theatrical reputation are always set-

ting out afresh, unincumbered by the affectation of the faults or excellences of their predecessors. In this respect, we conceive that the average quantity of dramatic talent remains more nearly the same than that in any other walk of art. In the other arts, (as painting and poetry), it may be supposed that what has been well done already, by giving rise to endless vapid imitations, is an obstacle to what might be done hereafter; that the models or *chef d'œuvres* of art, where they are accumulated, choke up the path to excellence; and that the works of genius, where they can be rendered permanent, and transmitted from age to age, not only prevent, but render superfluous, future productions of the same kind. We have not, neither do we want, two SHAKESPEARS, two MILTONS, two RAPHAELS, two POPES, any more than we require two suns in the same sphere. Even Miss O'NEILL stands a little in the way (and it is paying her a great compliment to say so) of our recollections of Mrs. SIDDONS. But Mr. KEAN is an excellent substitute for the memory of GARRICK, whom we never saw! When an author dies, it is no matter, for his works remain. When a great actor dies, there is a void produced in society, a gap which requires to be filled up. Who does not go to see KEAN? Who, if GARRICK were alive, would go to see him? At least, either one or the other must have quitted the stage; "For

two at a time there's no mortal could bear." Again, we know that Mr. KEAN cannot have been spoiled by GARRICK. He might indeed have been spoiled by Mr. KEMBLE or Mr. COOKE, but he fortunately has not. The stage is a place where genius is sure to come upon its legs in a generation or two. We cannot conceive of better actors than some of those we now have. In Comedy, LISTON is as good as EDWIN was when we were school-boys. We grant that we are deficient in genteel comedy; we have no fine gentlemen or ladies on the stage—nor off of it. That which is merely artificial and local is a matter of mimicry, and must exist, to be well copied. Players, however, have little reason to complain of their hard-earned, short-lived popularity. One thunder of applause from pit, boxes, and galleries, is equal to a whole immortality of posthumous fame; and when we hear an actor whose modesty is equal to his merit, declare that he would like to see a dog wag his tail in approbation, what must he feel when he sets the whole house in a roar? Besides, Fame, as if their reputation had been entrusted to her alone, has been particularly careful of the renown of her theatrical favourites; she forgets one by one, and year by year, those who have been great lawyers, great statesmen, and great warriors in their day; but the name of GARRICK still survives, with the works of REYNOLDS and of JOHNSON.

We do not know any one now-a-days, who could write MASSINGER's Comedy of A New Way to Pay Old Debts, though we do not believe that it was better acted at the time it was first brought out, than it is at present. We cannot conceive of any one's doing Mr. KEAN's part of Sir Giles Overreach so well as himself. We have seen others in the part, superior in the look and costume, in hardened, clownish, rustic insensibility; but in the soul and spirit, no one equal to him. He is a truly great actor. This is one of his very best parts. He was not at a single fault. The passages which we remarked as particularly striking and original, were those where he expresses his surprise at his nephew's answers, "His fortune swells him!—'Tis rank, he's married!" and again, where, after the exposure of his villanies, he calls to his accomplice Marall in a half-wheedling, half-terrific tone, "Come hither Marall, come hither." Though the speech itself is absurd and out of character, his manner of stopping when he is running at his foes, "I'm feeble, some widow's curse hangs on my sword," was exactly as if his arm had been suddenly withered, and his powers shrivelled up on the instant. The conclusion was quite overwhelming. Mr. KEAN looked the part well, and his voice does not fail as it used to do. Mr. MUNDEN's Marall was an admirable piece of acting, and produced some of the most complete comic contrasts we ever

saw. He overdoes his parts sometimes, and sometimes gets into parts for which he is not fit: but he has a fine broad face and manner which tells all the world over. His manner of avoiding the honour of a salute from the Lady Allworth, was a most deliberate piece of humour; and the account of the unexpected good fortune of young Welborn almost converts his eyes into saucers, and chokes him with surprise.

Mr. OXBERRY's Justice Greedy was very entertaining, both from the subject and from his manner of doing it. OXBERRY is a man of a practical imagination, and the apparitio. of fat turkeys, chines of bacon, and pheasants dressed in toast and butter, evidently floated in rapturous confusion before his senses. There is nothing that goes down better than what relates to eating and drinking, on the stage, in books, or in real life. Mr. HARLEY's Welborn was indifferent, but he is upon the whole a very pleasant actor. Mrs. GLOVER, as Lady Allworth, puts on some very agreeable frowns; and Mr. HOLLAND's Lord Lovell was one continued smile, without any meaning that we could discover, unless this actor, after his disguise in the Beggars' Bush, was delighted with the restoration of his hat and feather.

THE MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Jan. 20, 1816.

We hope we have not been accessory to murder, in recommending a delightful poem to be converted into a dull pantomime; for such is the fate of the Midsummer Night's Dream. We have found to our cost, once for all, that the regions of fancy and the boards of Covent-Garden are not the same thing. All that is fine in the play, was lost in the representation. The spirit was evaporated, the genius was fled; but the spectacle was fine: it was that which saved the play. Oh, ye scene-shifters, ye scene-painters, ye machinists and dress-makers, ye manufacturers of moon and stars that give no light, ye musical composers, ye men in the orchestra, fiddlers and trumpeters and players on the double drum and loud bassoon, rejoice! This is your triumph; it is not ours: and ye full-grown, well-fed, substantial, real fairies, Messieurs

Treby, and Truman, and Atkins, and Misses Matthews, Carew, Burrell, and Mac Alpine, we shall remember you: we shall believe no more in the existence of your fantastic tribe. Flute the bellows-mender, Snug the joiner, Starveling the tailor, farewell! you have lost the charm of your names; but thou, Nic Bottom, thou valiant Bottom, what shall we say to thee? Thou didst console us much; thou didst perform a good part well; thou didst top the part of Bottom the weaver? He comes out of thy hands as clean and clever a fellow as ever. Thou art a person of exquisite whim and humour; and thou didst hector over thy companions well, and fall down flat before the Duke, like other bullies, well; and thou didst sing the song of the Black Ousel well; but chief, thou didst noddle thy ass's head, which had been put upon thee, well; and didst seem to say, significantly, to thy new attendants, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed, "Gentlemen, I can present you equally to my friends, and to my enemies*!"

All that was good in this piece (except the scenery) was Mr. Liston's Bottom, which was an admirable and judicious piece of acting. Mr. Conway was Theseus. Who would ever have taken this gentleman for the friend and companion of Hercules? Miss Stephens played

* What Louis XVIII. said to his new National Guards.

the part of Hermia, and sang several songs very delightfully, which however by no means assisted the progress or interest of the story. Miss Foote played Helena. She is a very sweet girl, and not at all a bad actress; yet did any one feel or even hear her address to Hermia? To shew how far asunder the closet and the stage are, we give it here once more entire:

" Injurious Hermia, most ungrateful maid,
" Have you conspired, have you with these contriv'd
" To bait me with this foul derision?
" Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,
" The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
" When we have chid the hasty-footed time
" For parting us—Oh! and is all forgot?
" All school days' friendship, childhood innocence?
" We, Hermia, like two artificial Gods,
" Created with our needles both one flower,
" Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion;
" Both warbling of one song, both in one key;
" As if our hands, our sides, voices and minds,
" Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
" Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
" But yet an union in partition.
" And will you rend our ancient love asunder,
" And join with men in scorning your poor friend?
" It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly:
" Our sex as well as I may chide you for it,
" Though I alone do feel the injury."

In turning to Shakespear to look for this passage, the book opened at the Midsummer Night's Dream, the title of which half gave us back our old feeling; and in reading this one

speech twice over, we have completely forgot all the noise we have heard and the sights we have seen. Poetry and the stage do not agree together. The attempt to reconcile them fails not only of effect, but of decorum. The *ideal* has no place upon the stage, which is a picture without perspective; every thing there is in the foreground. That which is merely an airy shape, a dream, a passing thought, immediately becomes an unmanageable reality. Where all is left to the imagination, every circumstance has an equal chance of being kept in mind, and tells according to the mixed impression of all that has been suggested. But the imagination cannot sufficiently qualify the impressions of the senses. Any offence given to the eye is not to be got rid of by explanation. Thus Bottom's head in the play is a fantastic illusion, produced by magic spells: on the stage it is an ass's head, and nothing more; certainly a very strange costume for a gentleman to appear in. Fancy cannot be represented any more than a simile can be painted; and it is as idle to attempt it as to personate Wall or Moonshine. Fairies are not incredible, but fairies six feet high are so. Monsters are not shocking, if they are seen at a proper distance. When ghosts appear in mid-day, when apparitions stalk along Cheapside, then may the Midsummer Night's Dream be represented at Covent-Garden or at Drury-Lane; for we hear, that it is to be brought out there

also, and that we have to undergo another crucifixion.

Mrs. Faucit played the part of Titania very well, but for one circumstance—that she is a woman. The only glimpse which we caught of the possibility of acting the imaginary scenes properly, was from the little girl who dances before the fairies (we do not know her name), which seemed to shew that the whole might be carried off in the same manner—by a miracle.

Drury-Lane.

The admirable comedy of a New Way to Pay Old Debts, continues to be acted with increased effect. Mr. Kean is received with shouts of applause in Sir Giles Overreach. We have heard two objections to his manner of doing this part, one of which we think right and the other not. When he is asked, "Is he not moved by the orphan's tears, the widow's curse?" he answers—"Yes—as rocks by waves, or the moon by howling wolves." Mr. Kean, in speaking the latter sentence, dashes his voice about with the greatest violence, and howls out his indignation and rage. Now we conceive this is wrong: for he has to express not violence, but firm, inflexible resistance to it,—not motion, but rest. The very pause after the word *yes*, points out the cool deliberate way in which it should be spoken. The other objection is to his

manner of pronouncing the word "Lord,—Right Honourable Lord," which Mr. KEAN uniformly does in a drawling tone, with a mixture of fawning servility and sarcastic contempt. This has been thought inconsistent with the part, and with the desire which Sir Giles has to ennoble his family by alliance with a "Lord, a Right Honourable Lord." We think Mr. KEAN never shewed more genius than in pronouncing this single word, *Lord*. It is a complete exposure (produced by the violence of the character), of the elementary feelings which make up the common respect excited by mere rank. This is nothing but a cringing to power and opinion, with a view to turn them to our own advantage with the world. Sir Giles is one of those knaves, who "do themselves homage." He makes use of Lord Lovell merely as the stalking-horse of his ambition. In other respects, he has the greatest contempt for him, and the necessity he is under of paying court to him for his own purposes, infuses a double portion of gall and bitterness into the expression of his self-conscious superiority. No; Mr. KEAN was perfectly right in this, he spoke the word, "Lord" *con amore*. His praise of the kiss, "It came twanging off—I like it," was one of his happiest passages. It would perhaps be as well, if in the concluding scene he would contrive not to frighten the ladies into hysterics. But the whole together is admirable.

LOVE FOR LOVE.

Jan. 27, 1816.

CONGREVE's Comedy of Love for Love is, in wit and elegance, perhaps inferior to the Way of the World; but it is unquestionably the best-acting of all his plays. It abounds in dramatic situation, in incident, in variety of character. Still (such is the power of good writing) we prefer reading it in the closet, to seeing it on the stage. As it was acted the other night at Drury-Lane Theatre, many of the finest traits of character were lost. Though Love for Love is much less a tissue of epigrams than his other plays, the author has not been able to keep his wit completely under. Jeremy is almost as witty and learned as his master.—The part which had the greatest effect in the acting was MUNDEN's Foresight. We hardly ever saw a richer or more powerful piece of comic acting. It was done to the life, and indeed somewhat

over; but the effect was irresistible. His look was planet-struck, his dress and appearance like one of the signs of the Zodiac taken down. We never saw any thing more bewildered. PARSONS, if we remember right, gave more imbecility, more of the doating garrulity of age, to the part, and blundered on with a less determined air of stupidity.—Mr. DOWTON did not make much of Sir Sampson Legend. He looked well, like a hale, hearty old gentleman, with a close bob-wig, and bronze complexion; —but that was all. We were very much amused with Mr. HARLEY's *Tattle*. His indifference in the scene where he breaks off his engagement with Miss Prue, was very entertaining. In the scene in which he teaches her how to make love, he was less successful: he delivered his lessons to his fair disciple with the air of a person giving good advice, and did not seem to have a proper sense of his good fortune. "Desire to please, and you will infallibly please," is an old maxim, and Mr. HARLEY is an instance of the truth of it. This actor is always in the best possible humour with himself and the audience. He is as happy as if he had jumped into the very part which he liked the best of all others. Mr. RAE, on the contrary, who played Valentine, apparently feels as little satisfaction as he communicates. He always acts with an air of injured excellence.

Mrs. MARDYN's Miss Prue was not one of her most successful characters. It was a little hard and coarse. It was not fond and yielding enough. Miss Prue is made of the most susceptible materials. She played the hoydening parts best, as where she cries out, "School's up, school's up!"—and she knocked off Mr. BARTLEY's hat with great good-will.—Mr. BARTLEY was Ben; and we confess we think Miss Prue's distaste to him very natural. We cannot make up our minds to like this actor; and yet we have no fault to find with him. For instance, he played the character of Ben very properly; that is, just like "a great sea-porpoise." There is an art of qualifying such a part in a manner to carry off its disagreeableness, which Mr. BARTLEY wants. —Mrs. HARLOWE's Mrs. Frail was excellent: she appeared to be the identical Mrs. Frail, with all her airs of mincing affectation, and want of principle. The character was seen quite in dishabille. The scene between her and her sister Mrs. Foresight, about the discovery of the pin—"And pray sister where did you find that pin?" —was managed with as much coolness as any thing of this sort that ever happened in real life. —Mrs. ORGER played Mrs. Foresight with much ease and natural propriety. She in general reposes too much on her person, and does not display all the animation of which the character is susceptible. She is also too much in female

parts, what the *walking fine gentleman* of the stage used to be in male. Mr. BARNARD played Jeremy with a smart shrug in his shoulders, and the trusty air of a valet in his situation.

THE ANGLADE FAMILY.

Jan. 3, 1816.

The well known collection of French trials, under the title of *Causes Celebres*, has served as the ground-work of a new piece, brought out on Thursday at Drury-Lane Theatre, called Accusation, or The Anglade Family. The old historical materials are rather scanty, consisting only of a narrative of a robbery committed on a nobleman by some members of his own household, for which a M. D'Anglade, who with his family occupied part of the same hotel, was condemned on false evidence to the gallies, where grief and mortification put a period to his life before his innocence was discovered. On this foundation an interesting drama has been raised by the French author. M. Valmore is introduced as a lover of Madame D'Anglade, who rejects his unlawful pasaion. In revenge, he agrees with a worthless valet to rob his aunt,

who resides under the same roof with the family of M. D'Anglade, in whose hands part of the stolen property (consisting of bank-notes —a trifling anachronism) is treacherously deposited by an accomplice of Hubert, Valmore's servant, under pretence of paying for jewels which D'Anglade is compelled to dispose of to satisfy the demands made upon him by a relation who was supposed to have been dead, and whose estate he had inherited. He is seized under strong circumstances of suspicion by the police, and conveyed to prison; but the agents of Valmore are detected in stealing away with part of the property from the place where it had been secreted: they are stopped separately by the domestics of the injured person—each is made to believe that his accomplice has betrayed him—and on the manifestation of D'Anglade's innocence and of his own guilt, Valmore, unable to escape the pursuit of the officers of justice, puts an end to his existence with a pistol, in a summer-house in which he has in vain tried to conceal himself.

The interest excited is much of the same kind as in the Maid and the Magpye: and we think the piece will be almost as great a favourite with the public. There is a great deal of ingenuity shewn in the developement of the plot; the scenic effect is often beautiful, and the situations have real pathos.

The acting was upon the whole excellent. Miss KELLY, as the wife of the unfortunate D'Anglade, gave a high degree of interest to the story. She was only less delightful in this character than in that of the Maid of Paliseau, because she has less to do in it. Mr. RAE was the hero of the present drama, and he acquitted himself in it with considerable applause. We never saw Mr. BARTLEY to so much advantage as in the rough, honest character of the relation of D'Anglade, (we forget the name), who comes to claim restitution of his fortune, to try the integrity of his old friend, but who generously offers him his assistance as soon as he finds him plunged in distress. Mr. WALLACK was Valmore, and there was a scene of really fine acting between him and Mrs. Glover, (the Countess of Servan, his aunt), where she tries to probe the guilty conscience of her nephew, and to induce him to release D'Anglade from his dangerous situation, by a confession of the treachery of which he has been made the victim. Mr. S. PENLEY played the part of the unprincipled valet very unexceptionably, and Mr. BARNARD made an admirable accomplice, in the character of a strolling Italian musician. KNIGHT, as the raw country lad by whose means the plot is chiefly discovered, was as natural as he always is in such characters. He perhaps has got too much of a habit of expressing his joy by run-

ning up and down the stage with his arms spread out like a pair of wings. Mr. POWELL, as the faithful old servant of the Anglade family, was highly respectable. One sentiment in the play, "The woman who follows her husband to a prison, to share or to alleviate his misfortunes, is an ornament to her sex, and an honour to human nature," was highly applauded—we do not know for what particular reason*.

Covent-Garden.

The same drama has been abridged and brought out here as an After-piece. We cannot speak highly of the alteration. The sentimental French romance is cut down into an English farce, in which both the interest of the story and the *naiveté* of the characters are lost. The two characters of the Valet and the Italian stroller are confounded in the same person, and played by MATHEWS, who is death to the pathetic! CHARLES KEMBLE played the Count D'Anglade in a very gentlemanly manner. FARLEY was the most turbulent Valet we have ever seen.

* It was about this time that Madame Lavalette assisted her husband to escape from prison.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

Feb. 10, 1816.

In the "Lectures on Dramatic Literature by William Schlegel," the German translator of Shakespear, is the following criticism on Measure for Measure, which has been just acted at Covent-Garden Theatre: "In Measure for Measure, Shakespear was compelled, by the nature of the subject, to make his poetry more familiar with criminal justice than is usual with him. All kinds of proceedings connected with the subject, all sorts of active or passive persons, pass in review before us; the hypocritical Lord Deputy, the compassionate Provost, and the hard-hearted Hangman; a young man of quality who is to suffer for the seduction of his mistress before marriage, loose wretches brought in by the police, nay, even a hardened criminal whom the preparations for his execution cannot awake out of his callousness. But yet, notwithstand-

ing this convincing truth, how tenderly and mildly the whole is treated! The piece takes improperly its name from the punishment: the sense of the whole is properly the triumph of mercy over strict justice, no man being himself so secure from errors as to be entitled to deal it out among his equals. The most beautiful ornament of the composition is the character of Isabella, who, in the intention of taking the veil, allows herself to be again prevailed on by pious love to tread the perplexing ways of the world, while the heavenly purity of her mind is not even stained with one unholy thought by the general corruption. In the humble robes of the novice of a nunnery, she is a true angel of light. When the cold and hitherto unsullied Angelo, whom the Duke has commissioned to restrain the excess of dissolute immorality by a rigid administration of the laws during his pretended absence, is even himself tempted by the virgin charms of Isabella, as she supplicates for her brother Claudio; when he first insinuates, in timid and obscure language, but at last impudently declares his readiness to grant the life of Claudio for the sacrifice of her honour; when Isabella repulses him with a noble contempt; when she relates what has happened to her brother, and the latter at first applauds her, but at length, overpowered by the dread of death, wishes to persuade her to consent to her disho-

nour; in these masterly scenes SHAKESPEAR has sounded the depth of the human heart. The interest here reposes altogether on the action curiosity constitutes no part of our delight; for the Duke, in the disguise of a monk, is always present to watch over his dangerous representatives, and to avert every evil which could possibly be apprehended: we look here with confidence to the *solemn* decision. The Duke acts the part of the Monk naturally, even to deception; he unites in his person the wisdom of the priest and the prince. His wisdom is merely too fond of roundabout ways; his vanity is flattered with acting invisibly like an earthly providence; he is more entertained with overhearing his subjects than governing them in the customary manner. As he at last extends pardon to all the guilty, we do not see how his original purpose of restoring the strictness of the laws by committing the execution of them to other hands, has been in any wise accomplished. The poet might have had this irony in view—that of the numberless slanders of the Duke, told him by the petulant Lucio, without knowing the person to whom he spoke, what regarded his singularities and whims was not wholly without foundation.

"It is deserving of remark, that SHAKESPEAR, amidst the rancour of religious parties, takes a delight in representing the condition of a monk,

and always represents his influence as beneficial. We find in him none of the black and knavish monks, which an enthusiasm for the Protestant Religion, rather than poetical inspiration, has suggested to some of our modern poets. SHAKESPEAR merely gives his monks an inclination to busy themselves in the affairs of others, after renouncing the world for themselves; with respect, however, to privy frauds, he does not represent them as very conscientious. Such are the parts acted by the Monk in Romeo and Juliet, and another in Much ado about Nothing, and even by the Duke, whom, contrary to the well known proverb, "the cowl seems really to make a monk." Vol. ii. p. 169.

This is, we confess, a very poor criticism on a very fine play; but we are not in the humour (even if we could) to write a better. A very obvious beauty, which has escaped the critic, is the admirable description of life, as poetical as it is metaphysical, beginning, "If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing," &c. to the truth and justice of which Claudio assents, contrasted almost immediately afterwards with his fine description of death as the worst of ills:

"To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
"This sensible warm motion to become
"A kneaded clod, and the delighted spirit
"To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
"In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice.
"————————'Tis too horrible!

" The weariest and most loathed worldly life
" That age, ache, penury, imprisonment,
" Can lay on nature, is a paradise
" To what we fear of death."—

Neither has he done justice to the character of Master Barnardine, one of the finest (and that's saying a bold word) in all SHAKESPEAR. He calls him a hardened criminal. He is no such thing. He is what he is by nature, not by circumstance, " careless, reckless, and fearless of past, present, and to come." He is Caliban transported to the forests of Bohemia, or the prisons of Vienna. He has, however, a sense of the natural fitness of things: " He has been drinking hard all night, and he will not be hanged that day," and SHAKESPEAR has let him off at last. EMERY does not play it well, for Master Barnardine is not the representative of a Yorkshireman, but of an universal class in nature. We cannot say that the Clown Pompey suffered in the hands of Mr. LISTON; on the contrary, he played it inimitably well. His manner of saying " a dish of some three-pence" was worth any thing. In the scene of his examination before the Justice, he delayed, and dallied, and dangled in his answers, in the true spirit of the genius of his author.

We do not understand why the philosophical critic, whom we have quoted above, should be so severe on those pleasant persons Lucio, Pompey,

and Master Froth, as to call them "wretches." They seem all mighty comfortable in their occupations, and determined to pursue them, "as the flesh and fortune should serve." SHAKESPEAR was the least moral of all writers; for morality (commonly so called) is made up of antipathies, and his talent consisted in sympathy with human nature, in all its shapes, degrees, elevations, and depressions. The object of the pedantic moralist is to make the worst of every thing; *his* was to make the best, according to his own principle, "There is some soul of goodness in things evil." Even Master Barnardine is not left to the mercy of what others think of him, but when he comes in, he speaks for himself. We would recommend it to the Society for the Suppression of Vice to read SHAKESPEAR.

Mr. YOUNG played the Duke tolerably well. As to the cant introduced into SCHLEGEL'S account of the Duke's assumed character of a Monk, we scout it altogether. He takes advantage of the good-nature of the poet to impose on the credulity of mankind. CHAUCER spoke of the Monks historically, SHAKESPEAR poetically. It was not in the nature of SHAKESPEAR to insult over "the enemies of the human race" just after their fall. We however object to them entirely in this age of the revival of Inquisitions and Protestant massacres. We have not that stretch of philosophical comprehension which, in German

metaphysics, unites popery and free-thinking together, loyalty and regicide, and which binds up the Bible and Spinoza in the same volume! —Mr. JONES did not make a bad Lucio. Miss O'NEILL's Isabella, though full of merit, disappointed us; as indeed she has frequently done of late. Her "Oh fie, fie," was the most spirited thing in her performance. She did not seize with much force the spirit of her author, but she seemed in complete possession of a certain conventicle twang. She whined and sang out her part in that querulous tone that has become unpleasant to us by ceaseless repetition. She at present plays all her parts in the Magdalen style. We half begin to suspect that she represents the bodies, not the souls of women, and that her *forte* is in tears, sighs, sobs, shrieks, and hysterics. She does not play either Juliet or Isabella finely. She must stick to the common-place characters of OTWAY, MOORE, and Miss HANNAH MORE, or she will ruin herself. As Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS concluded his last lecture with the name of MICHAEL ANGELO, as VETUS wished the name of the Marquis WELLESLEY to conclude his last letter, so we will conclude this article with a devout apostrophe to the name of Mrs. SIDDONS.

MR. KEAN'S SIR GILES OVERREACH.

Feb. 17, 1816.

We saw Mr. Kean's Sir Giles Overreach on Friday night from the boxes at Drury-Lane Theatre, and are not surprised at the incredulity as to this great actor's powers, entertained by those persons who have only seen him from that elevated sphere. We do not hesitate to say, that those who have only seen him at that distance, have not seen him at all. The expression of his face is quite lost, and only the harsh and grating tones of his voice produce their full effect on the ear. The same recurring sounds, by dint of repetition, fasten on the attention, while the varieties and finer modulations are lost in their passage over the pit. All you discover is an abstraction of his defects, both of person, voice, and manner. He appears to be a little man in a great passion. The accompaniment of expression is absolutely necessary to explain

his tones and gestures: and the outline which he gives of the character, in proportion as it is bold and decided, requires to be filled up and modified by all the details of execution. Without seeing the workings of his face, through which you read the movements of his soul, and anticipate their violent effects on his utterance and action, it is impossible to understand or feel pleasure in the part. All strong expression, deprived of its gradations and connecting motives, unavoidably degenerates into caricature. This was the effect uniformly produced on those about us, who kept exclaiming, "How extravagant, how odd," till the last scene, where the extreme and admirable contrasts both of voice and gesture in which Mr. KEAN's genius shews itself, and which are in their nature more obviously intelligible, produced a change of opinion in his favour.

As a proof of what we have above advanced, it was not possible to discover in the last scene, where he is lifted from the ground by the attendants, and he rivets his eyes in dreadful despair upon his daughter, whether they were open or closed. The action of advancing to the middle of the stage, and his faultering accent in saying "Marall, come hither, Marall," could not be mistaken. The applause, however, came almost constantly from those who were near the orchestra, and circulated in eddies round the house. It is

unpleasant to see a play from the boxes. There is no part of the house which is so thoroughly wrapped up in itself, and fortified against any impression from what is passing on the stage; which seems so completely weaned from all superstitious belief in dramatic illusion; which takes so little interest in all that is interesting. Not a cravat nor a muscle was discomposed, except now and then by some gesticulation of Mr. Kean, which violated the decorum of fashionable indifference, or by some expression of the author, two hundred years old. Mr. KEAN's acting is not, we understand, much relished in the upper circles. It is thought too obtrusive and undisguised a display of nature. Neither was GARRICK's at all relished at first, by the old Nobility, till it became the fashion to admire him. The court-dresses, the drawing-room strut, and the sing-song declamation, which he banished from the stage, were thought much more dignified and imposing.

THE RECRUITING OFFICER.

March 2, 1816.

FARQUHAR's Comedy of the Recruiting Officer was revived at Drury-Lane Theatre on Tuesday, when Mrs. MARDYN appeared as Sylvia. She looked very charmingly in it while she continued in her female dress, and displayed some good acting, particularly in the scene where Plume gives her his will to read; but we did not like her at all as Young Wilful, with her jockey coat, breeches, and boots. Her dress seemed as if contrived on purpose to hide the beauties of her natural shape, and discover its defects. A woman in Hessian boots can no more move gracefully under such an additional and unusual incumbrance to her figure, than a man could with a clog round each leg. We hope that she will re-cast her male attire altogether, if she has not already done it. The want of vivacity and elegance in her appearance

gave a flatness to the latter part of the comedy, which was not relieved by the circumstance of Mr. RAE's forgetting his part. We do not think he played the airy, careless, lively Captain Plume well; and Mr. HARLEY did not play *Captain* Brazen, but *Serjeant* Brazen. JOHNSTONE's Serjeant Kite was not very happy. JOHNSTONE's impudence is good-humoured and natural, Serjeant Kite's is knavish impudence. JOHNSTONE is not exactly fitted for any character, the failings of which do not lean to the amiable side. There was one speech which entirely suited him, and that was where he says to his Captain, "The mob are so pleased with your Honour, and the justices and better sort of people are so delighted with me, that we shall soon do our business!" MUNDEN's Costar Pearmain, and KNIGHT's Thomas Appletree, were a double treat. KNIGHT's fixed, rivetted look at the guinea, accompanied with the exclamation, "Oh the wonderful works of Nature!" and MUNDEN's open-mouthed, reeling wonder, were in the best style of broad comic acting. If any thing, this scene was even surpassed by that in which MUNDEN, after he has listed with Plume, makes his approximations to his friend, who is whimpering, and casting at him a most inviting ogle, with an expression of countenance all over oily and lubricated, emphatically ejaculates, "Well, Tummy!" We have no wish to see

better acting than this. This actor has won upon our good opinion, and we here retract openly all that we have said disrespectfully of his talents, generally speaking. Miss KELLY's Rose was played *con amore;* it was an exquisite exhibition of rustic *naiveté*. Her riding on the basket as a side-saddle, was very spirited and well contrived. Passion expresses itself in such characters by a sort of uneasy bodily vivacity, which no actress gives so well as Miss KELLY. We ought not to omit, that she cries her chickens in a good shrill huswifely market-voice, as if she would drive a good bargain with them. Mr. POWELL played Justice Balance as well as if he had been the Justice himself.

The Recruiting Officer is not one of FARQUHAR's best comedies, though it is lively and entertaining. It contains merely sketches of characters, and the conclusion of the plot is rather lame. He informs us in the dedication to the published play, that it was founded on some local and personal circumstances that happened in Shropshire, where he was a recruiting officer, and it seems not unlikely that most of the scenes actually took place near the foot of the Wrekin.

THE FAIR PENITENT.

Covent-Garden, March 9, 1816.

The Fair Penitent is a tragedy which has been found fault with both on account of its poetry and its morality. Notwithstanding these objections, it still holds possession of the stage, where morality is not very eagerly sought after, and poetry but imperfectly understood. We conceive, that for every purpose of practical criticism, that is a good tragedy which draws tears without moving laughter. Rowe's play is founded on one of Massinger's, the Fatal Dowry, in which the characters are a good deal changed, and the interest not increased. The genius of Rowe was slow and timid, and loved the ground: he had not "a Muse of fire to ascend the brightest heaven of invention:" but he had art and judgment enough to accommodate the more daring flights of a ruder age to the polished well-bred mediocrity of the age he lived in. We may say of Rowe as

VOLTAIRE said of RACINE: "All his lines are equally good." The compliment is after all equivocal; but it is one which may be applied generally to all poets, who in their productions are always thinking of what they shall say, and of what others have said, and who are never hurried into excesses of any kind, good or bad, by trusting implicitly to the impulse of their own genius or of the subject. The excellent author of Tom Jones, in one of his introductory chapters, represents ROWE as an awkward imitator of SHAKESPEAR. He was rather an imitator of the style and tone of sentiment of that age,—a sort of modernizer of antiquity. The character of Calista is quite in the *bravura* style of MASSINGER. She is a heroine, a virago, fair, a woman of high spirit and violent resolutions, any thing but a penitent. She dies indeed at last, not from remorse for her vices, but because she can no longer gratify them. She has not the slightest regard for her virtue, and not much for her reputation; but she would brand with scorn, and blast with the lightning of her indignation, the friend who wishes to stop her in the career of her passions in order to save her from destruction and infamy. She has a strong sentiment of respect and attachment to her father, but she will sooner consign his grey hairs to shame and death than give up the least of her inclinations, or sacrifice her sullen gloom to the

common decencies of behaviour. She at last pretends conversion from her errors, in a soft whining address to her husband, and after having deliberately and wantonly done all the mischief in her power, with her eyes open, wishes that she had sooner known better, that she might have acted differently! We do not however for ourselves object to the morality of all this: for we apprehend that morality is little more than truth; and we think that Rowe has given a very true and striking picture of the nature and consequences of that wilful selfishness of disposition, "which to be hated needs but to be seen." We do not think it necessary that the spectator should wait for the reluctant conversion of the character itself, to be convinced of its odiousness or folly, or that the only instruction to be derived from the drama is, not from the insight it gives us into the nature of human character and passion, but from some artificial piece of patchwork morality tacked to the end. However, Rowe has so far complied with the rules.

After what we have said of the character of Calista, Miss O'Neill will perhaps excuse us if we do not think that she was a very perfect representative of it. The character, as she gave it, was a very fine and impressive piece of acting, but it was not quite Calista. She gave the pathos, but not the spirit of the character. Her grief was sullen and sad, not impatient and un-

governable. Calista's melancholy is not a settled dejection, but a feverish state of agitation between conflicting feelings. Her eyes should look bright and sparkling through her tears. Her action should be animated and aspiring. Her present woes should not efface the traces of past raptures. There should be something in her appearance of the intoxication of pleasure, mixed with the madness of despair. The scene in which Miss O'Neill displayed most power, was that in which she is shewn her letter to Lothario by Horatio, her husband's friend. The rage and shame with which her bosom seemed labouring were truly dreadful. This is the scene in which the poet has done most for the imagination, and it is the characteristic excellence of Miss O'Neill's acting, that it always rises with the expectations of the audience. She also repeated the evasive answer, "It was the day in which my father gave my hand to Altamont—as such I shall remember it for ever," in a tone of deep and suppressed emotion. It is needless to add, that she played the part with a degree of excellence which no other actress could approach, and that she was only inferior to herself in it, because there is not the same opportunity for the display of her inimitable powers, as in some of her other characters.

THE DUKE OF MILAN.

March 15, 1816.

We do not think the Duke of Milan will become so great a favourite as Sir Giles Overreach, at Drury-Lane Theatre. The first objection to this play is, that it is an arbitrary falsification of history. There is nothing in the life of Sforza, the supposed hero of the piece, to warrant the account of the extravagant actions and tragical end which are here attributed to him, to say nothing of political events. In the second place, his resolution to destroy his wife, to whom he is passionately attached, rather than bear the thought of her surviving him, is as much out of the verge of nature and probability, as it is unexpected and revolting from the want of any circumstances of palliation leading to it. It stands out alone, a piece of pure voluntary atrocity, which seems not the dictate of passion but a start of phrenzy. From the first abrupt mention of this design to

his treacherous accomplice, Francesco, he loses the favour, and no longer excites the sympathy of the audience. Again, Francesco is a person whose actions we are at a loss to explain, till the last act of the piece, when the attempt to account for them from motives originally amiable and generous, only produces a double sense of incongruity, and instead of satisfying the mind, renders it totally incredulous. He endeavours to debauch the wife of his benefactor, he then attempts her death, slanders her foully, and wantonly causes her to be slain by the hand of her husband, and has him poisoned by a deliberate stratagem; and all this to appease a high sense of injured honour, "which felt a stain like a wound," and from the tender overflowings of fraternal affection; his sister having, it appears, been formerly betrothed to, and afterwards deserted by the Duke.

In the original play, the Duke is killed by a poison which is spread by Francesco over the face of the deceased Duchess, whose lips her husband fondly kisses, though cold in death, in the distracted state into which he is plunged by remorse for his rash act. But in the acted play, it is so contrived, that the sister of Francesco personates the murdered Duchess, and poisons the Duke (as it is concerted with her brother), by holding a flower in her hand, which, as he squeezes it, communicates the infection it has

received from some juice in which it has been steeped. How he is to press the flower in her hand, in such a manner as not to poison her as well as himself, is left unexplained. The lady, however, does not die, and a reconciliation takes place between her and her former lover. We hate these sickly sentimental endings, without any meaning in them.

The peculiarity of MASSINGER's vicious characters seems in general to be, that they are totally void of moral sense, and have a gloating pride and disinterested pleasure in their villanies, unchecked by the common feelings of humanity. Francesco, in the present play, holds it out to the last, defies his enemies, and is "proud to die what he was born." At other times, after the poet has carried on one of these hardened unprincipled characters for a whole play, he is seized with a sudden qualm of conscience, and his villain is visited with a judicial remorse. This is the case with Sir Giles Overreach, whose hand is restrained in the last extremity of his rage by "some widow's curse that hangs upon it," and whose heart is miraculously melted "by orphan's tears." We will not, however, deny that such may be a true picture of the mixed barbarity and superstition of the age in which MASSINGER wrote. We have no doubt that his Sir Giles Overreach, which some have thought an incredible exaggeration, was an

actual portrait. Traces of such characters are still to be found in some parts of the country, and in classes to which modern refinement and modern education have not penetrated;—characters that not only make their own selfishness and violence the sole rule of their actions, but triumph in the superiority which their want of feeling and of principle gives them over their opponents or dependants. In the time of MASSINGER, philosophy had made no progress in the minds of country gentlemen: nor had the theory of moral sentiments, in the community at large, been fashioned and moulded into shape by systems of ethics continually pouring in upon us from the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen. Persons in the situation, and with the dispositions of Sir Giles, cared not what wrong they did, nor what was thought of it, if they had only the power to maintain it. There is no calculating the advantages of civilization and letters, in taking off the hard, coarse edge of rusticity, and in softening social life. The vices of refined and cultivated periods are *personal* vices, such as proceed from too unrestrained a pursuit of pleasure in ourselves, not from a desire to inflict pain on others.

Mr. KEAN's Sforza is not his most striking character; on the contrary, it is one of his least impressive, and least successful ones. The mad scene was fine, but we have seen him do better.

The character is too much at cross-purposes with itself, and before the actor has time to give its full effect to any impulse of passion, it is interrupted and broken off by some caprice or change of object. In Mr. KEAN's representation of it, our expectations were often excited, but never thoroughly satisfied, and we were teased with a sense of littleness in every part of it. It entirely wants the breadth, force, and grandeur of his Sir Giles.

One of the scenes, a view of the court-house at Milan, was most beautiful. Indeed, the splendour of the scenery and dresses frequently took away from the effect of Mr. KEAN's countenance.

MISS O'NEILL'S LADY TEAZLE.

March 23, 1816.

Miss O'Neill's Lady Teazle at Covent-Garden Theatre appears to us to be a complete failure. It was not comic; it was not elegant; it was not easy; it was not dignified; it was not playful; it was not any thing that it ought to be. All that can be said of it is, that it was not tragedy. It seemed as if all the force and pathos which she displays in interesting situations had left her, but that not one spark of gaiety, one genuine expression of delight, had come in their stead. It was a piece of laboured heavy *still-life*. The only thing that had an air of fashion about her was the feather in her hat. It was not merely that she did not succeed as Miss O'Neill; it would have been a falling off in the most common-place actress who had ever done any thing tolerably. She gave to the character neither the complete finished air of fashionable indifference, which was the way in which Miss Farren

played it, if we remember right, nor that mixture of artificial refinement and natural vivacity, which appears to be the true idea of the character (which however is not very well made out), but she seemed to have been thrust by some injudicious caprice of fortune, into a situation for which she was fitted neither by nature nor education. There was a perpetual affectation of the wit and the fine lady, with an evident consciousness of effort, a desire to please without any sense of pleasure. It was no better than awkward mimicry of the part, and more like a drawling imitation of Mrs. C. KEMBLE's genteel comedy than any thing else we have seen. The concluding penitential speech was an absolute sermon. We neither liked her manner of repeating "Mimminee pimminee," nor of describing the lady who rides round the ring in Hyde-park, nor of chucking Sir Peter under the chin, which was a great deal too coarse and familiar. There was throughout an equal want of delicacy and spirit, of ease and effect, of nature and art. It was in general flat and insipid, and where any thing more was attempted, it was overcharged and unpleasant.

FAWCETT's Sir Peter Teazle was better than when we last saw it. He is an actor of much merit, but he has of late got into a strange way of slurring over his parts. LISTON's Sir Benjamin Backbite was not very successful. CHARLES

KEMBLE played Charles Surface very delightfully.

GUY MANNERING, or the Gipsey's Prophecy, taken from the novel of that name, and brought out at Covent-Garden, is a very pleasing romantic drama. It is, we understand, from the pen of Mr. TERRY, and reflects much credit on his taste and talents. The scenes between Miss STEPHENS, Miss MATTHEWS, and Mr. ABBOTT, as Lucy Bertram, Julia Mannering, and Colonel Mannering, have a high degree of elegance and interest. Mrs. EGERTON's Meg Merrilies was equal in force and nature to her Miller's Wife; and we cannot pay it a higher compliment. It makes the blood run cold. Mr. HIGMAN played the chief Gipsey very well, and nothing could be better represented than the unfeeling, shuffling tricks and knavish impudence of the Gipsey Boy, by Master WILLIAMS. LISTON's Dominie Sampson was *prodigious;* his talents are *prodigious.* The appearance and the interest he gave to the part were quite patriarchal. The unconscious simplicity of the humour was exquisite; it will give us a better opinion of the Scotch Clergy, and almost of the Scotch nation (if that were possible) while we live.

MR. KEAN.

March 30, 1816.

A CHASM has been produced in the amusements of Drury-Lane Theatre by the accident which has happened to Mr. KEAN. He was to have played the Duke of Milan on Tuesday, but as he had not come to the Theatre at the time of the drawing up of the curtain, Mr. RAE came forward to propose another tragedy, Douglas. To this the audience did not assent, and wished to wait. Mr. KEAN, however, not appearing, nor any tidings being heard of him, he was at length given up, and two farces substituted in his stead. Conjectures and rumours were afloat; and it was not till the next day that it was discovered that Mr. KEAN having dined a few miles in the country, and returning at a very quick pace to keep his engagement at the Theatre, was thrown out of his gig, and had his arm dislocated, besides being stunned and very much

bruised with the fall. On this accident a grave morning paper is pleased to be facetious. It observes that this is a very *serious* accident; that actors in general are liable to *serious* accidents; that the late Mr. Cooke used to meet with *serious* accidents; that it is a sad thing to be in the way of such accidents; and that it is to be hoped that Mr. Kean will meet with no more *serious* accidents. It is to be hoped that he will not—nor with any such profound observations upon them, if they should happen. Next to that spirit of bigotry which in a neighbouring country would deny actors christian burial after death, we hate that cant of criticism, which slurs over their characters while living with a half-witted jest. Actors are accused as a profession of being extravagant and intemperate. While they are said to be so as a piece of common cant, they are likely to continue so. But there is a sentence in Shakespear which should be stuck as a label in the mouths of the beadles and whippers-in of morality: "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn: our virtues would be proud if our vices whipped them not, and our faults would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues."

With respect to the extravagance of actors, as a traditional character, it is not to be wondered at: they live from hand to mouth; they plunge from want into luxury; they have no means of

making money *breed*, and all professions that do not live by turning money into money, or have not a certainty of accumulating it in the end by parsimony, spend it. Uncertain of the future, they make sure of the present moment. This is not unwise. Chilled with poverty, steeped in contempt, they sometimes pass into the sun-shine of fortune, and are lifted to the very pinnacle of public favour, yet even there cannot calculate on the continuance of success, but are, "like the giddy sailor on the mast, ready with every blast to topple down into the fatal bowels of the deep!" Besides, if the young enthusiast who is smitten with the stage, and with the public as a mistress, were naturally a close *hunks*, he would become or remain a city clerk, instead of turning player. Again, with respect to the habit of convivial indulgence, an actor, to be a good one, must have a great spirit of enjoyment in himself, strong impulses, strong passions, and a strong sense of pleasure, for it is his business to imitate the passions and to communicate pleasure to others. A man of genius is not a machine. The neglected actor may be excused if he drinks oblivion of his disappointments; the successful one, if he quaffs the applause of the world, and enjoys the friendship of those who are the friends of the favourites of fortune, in draughts of nectar. There is no path so steep as that of fame; no labour so

hard as the pursuit of excellence. The intellectual excitement inseparable from those professions which call forth all our sensibility to pleasure and pain, requires some corresponding physical excitement to support our failure, and not a little to allay the ferment of the spirits attendant on success. If there is any tendency to dissipation beyond this in the profession of a player, it is owing to the state of public opinion, which paragraphs like the one we have alluded to are not calculated to reform; and players are only not so *respectable* as a profession as they might be, because their profession is not *respected* as it ought to be.

There is something, we fear, impertinent and uncalled for in these remarks: the more so, as in the present instance the insinuation which they were meant to repel is wholly unfounded. We have it on very good authority, that Mr. KEAN, since his engagement at Drury-Lane, and during his arduous and uninterrupted exertions in his profession, has never missed a single rehearsal, nor been absent a minute beyond the time for beginning his part.

MR. KEAN'S SHYLOCK.

April 6, 1816.

Mr. Kean's friends felt some unnecessary anxiety with respect to his reception in the part of Shylock, on Monday night at Drury-Lane, being his first appearance after his recovery from his accident, which we are glad to find has not been a very serious one. On his coming on the stage there was a loud burst of applause and welcome; but as this was mixed with some hisses, Mr. Kean came forward, and spoke nearly as follows:

"Ladies and Gentlemen, for the first time in my life I have been the unfortunate cause of disappointing the public amusement.

"That it is the only time, on these boards, I can appeal to your own recollection; and when you take into calculation the 265 times that I have had the honour to appear before you, according to the testimony of the Managers' books, you will, perhaps, be able to make some allowance.

"To your favour I owe all the reputation I enjoy.

"I rely on your candour, that prejudice shall not rob me of what your kindness has conferred upon me."

This address was received with cordial cheers, and the play went forward without interruption. As soon as the curtain drew up, some persons had absurdly called out "KEAN, KEAN," though Shylock does not appear in the first scenes. This was construed into a call for "God save the *King*:" and the Duke of GLOUCESTER's being in one of the stage-boxes seemed to account for this sudden effusion of loyalty,—a sentiment indeed always natural in the hearts of Englishmen, but at present not very noisy, and rather "deep than loud." For our own parts, we love the King according to law, but we cannot sing.

Shylock was the part in which Mr. KEAN first sought the favour of the town, and in which perhaps he chose for that reason to be reconciled to it, after the first slight misunderstanding. We were a little curious on this occasion to see the progress he has made in public opinion since that time; and on turning to our theatrical common-place book (there is nothing like a common-place book after all) found the following account of his first reception, copied from the most respectable of the Morning Papers: "Mr. KEAN (of whom report has spoken so highly) made his appearance at Drury-Lane in the character of Shylock. For *voice*, eye, action, and expression, no actor has come out for many years at all equal to him. The applause, from the

first scene to the last, was general, loud, and uninterrupted. Indeed, the very first scene in which he comes on with Bassanio and Anthonio, shewed the master in his art, and at once decided the opinion of the audience. Perhaps it was the most perfect of any. Notwithstanding the complete success of Mr. KEAN in Shylock, we question whether he will not become a greater favourite in other parts. There was a lightness and vigour in his tread, a buoyancy and elasticity of spirit, a fire and animation, which would accord better with almost any other character than with the morose, sullen, inward, inveterate, inflexible, malignity of Shylock. The character of Shylock is that of a man brooding over one idea, that of its wrongs, and bent on an unalterable purpose, that of revenge. In conveying a profound impression of this feeling, or in embodying the general conception of rigid and uncontroulable self-will, equally proof against every sentiment of humanity or prejudice of opinion, we have seen actors more successful than Mr. KEAN. But in giving effect to the conflict of passions arising out of the contrast of situation, in varied vehemence of declamation, in keenness of sarcasm, in the rapidity of his transitions from one tone or feeling to another, in propriety and novelty of action, presenting a succession of striking pictures, and giving perpetually fresh shocks of delight and surprise, it

would be difficult to single out a competitor. The fault of his acting was (if we may hazard an objection), an over display of the resources of the art, which gave too much relief to the hard, impenetrable, dark ground-work of the character of Shylock. It would be needless to point out individual beauties, where almost every passage was received with equal and deserved applause. His style of acting is, if we may use the expression, more significant, more pregnant with meaning, more varied and alive in every part, than any we have almost ever witnessed. The character never stands still; there is no vacant pause in the action: the eye is never silent. It is not saying too much of Mr. KEAN, though it is saying a great deal, that he has all that Mr. KEMBLE *wants* of perfection."

The accounts in the other papers were not to be sure so favourable; and in the above criticism there are several errors. His voice, which is here praised, is very bad, though it must be confessed its defects appear less in Shylock than in most of his other characters. The critic appears also to have formed an overstrained idea of the gloomy character of Shylock, probably more from seeing other players perform it than from the text of SHAKESPEAR. Mr. KEAN's manner is much nearer the mark. SHAKESPEAR could not easily divest his characters of their entire humanity: his Jew is more than half a

Christian. Certainly, our sympathies are much oftener with him than with his enemies. He is honest in his vices; they are hypocrites in their virtues. In all his arguments and replies he has the advantage over them, by taking them on their own ground. Shylock (however some persons may suppose him bowed down by age, or deformed with malignity) never, that we can find, loses his elasticity and presence of mind. There is wonderful grace and ease in all the speeches in this play. "I would not have parted with it (the jewel that he gave to Leah) for a *wilderness* of monkeys!" What a fine Hebraism! The character of Shylock is another instance of SHAKESPEAR's power of identifying himself with the thoughts of men, their prejudices, and almost instincts.

THE ORATORIOS.

April 13, 1816.

The Oratorios are over, and we are not sorry for it. Not that we are not fond of music; on the contrary, there is nothing that affects us so much; but the note it sounds is of too high a sphere. It lifts the soul to heaven, but in so doing, it exhausts the faculties, draws off the ethereal and refined part of them, and we fall back to the earth more dull and lumpish than ever. Music is the breath of thought; the audible movement of the heart. It is, for the most part, a pure effusion of sentiment; the language of pleasure, abstracted from its exciting causes. But the human mind is so formed, that it cannot easily bear, for any length of time, an uninterrupted appeal to the sense of pleasure alone; we require the relief of objects and ideas; it may be said that the activity of the soul, of the voluptuous part of our nature, cannot keep pace

with that of the understanding, which only discerns the outward differences of things. All passion exhausts the mind; and that kind of passion most, which presents no distinct object to the imagination. The eye may amuse itself for a whole day with the variety to be found in a florist's garden; but the sense is soon cloyed with the smell of the sweetest flowers, and we throw them from us as if they had been weeds. The sounds of music are like perfumes, "exhaling to the sky;" too sweet to last; that must be borne to us on the passing breeze, not pressed and held close to the sense; the warbling of heavenly voices in the air, not the ordinary language of men. If music is (as it is said to be) the language of angels, poetry is the most perfect language men can use: for poetry is music also, and has as much of the soft and voluptuous in its nature, as the hard and unyielding materials of our composition will bear. Music is colour without form; a soul without a body; a mistress whose face is veiled; an invisible goddess.

The Oratorios at Covent-Garden are in general much better than those at Drury-Lane: this year they have had Braham, Miss Stephens, Madam Marconi, and, if that were any great addition, Madame Mainville Fodor. Of this last lady it may be said, that she "has her exits and her entrances," and that is nearly all you

know of her. She was encored in one song, "Ah pardonna," to her evident chagrin. Her airs of one kind scarcely make amends for her airs of another. Her voice is clear and forcible, and has a kind of deep internal volume, which seems to be artificially suppressed. Her hard, firm style of execution (something like the dragging of the painter's pencil) gives a greater relief to the occasional sweetness and power of tone which she displays. Her taste in singing is severe and fastidious; and this is, we suppose, the reason that a connoisseur of great eminence compared it to Titian's colouring. Madam Marconi, on the contrary, has a broad and full manner; sings with all her might, and pours out her whole soul and voice. There is something masculine, and we might say, rather vulgar, in her tones, if her native Italian or broken English did not prevent such a suggestion almost before it rises in the mind. Miss Stephens sang with more than her usual spirit, and was much applauded, particularly in "The mower wets his scythe," &c.; but we do not think her *forte* is in concert-music. Mr. Braham's certainly is; and his power is thrown away on the ballad airs which he sings in general on the stage. The sweetness of his voice becomes languishing and effeminate, unless where it is sustained by its depth and power. But on these occasions there is a rich mellifluous tone in

his cadences, which is like that of bees swarming; his chest is dilated; he heaves the loud torrent of sound, like a load, from his heart; his voice rises in thunder, and his whole frame is inspired with the god! He sung Luther's Hymn very finely, with the exception of one quavering falsetto. This appears to our ignorant fancies at once the simplest and sublimest of compositions. The whole expresses merely the alternations of respiration, the heaving or drawing in of the breath, with the rising or sinking of hope or fear. It is music to which the dead might awake! On the last night of the Covent-Garden Oratorio, the beginning of HAYDN'S Creation was played. It is the accompaniment to the words, "And God said let there be light," &c. The adaptation of sound to express certain ideas, is most ingenious and admirable. The rising of the sun is described by a crashing and startling movement of sounds in all directions, like the effulgence of its rays sparkling through the sky; and the moon is made to rise to a slow and subdued symphony, like sound muffled, or like the moon emerging from a veil of mist, according to that description in Milton,—

——— ——— "Till the moon
"Rising in clouded majesty, at length
"Apparent queen unveiled her peerless light,
"And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw."

The stars also are represented twinkling in the blue abyss, by intervals of sweet sounds just audible. The art, however, by which this is done, is perhaps too little natural to please.

Mons. DROUET's performance on the flute was masterly, as far as we could judge. The execution of his variations on "God save the King," astonished and delighted the connoisseurs. Those on "Hope told a flattering tale," were also exquisite. We are, however, deep-versed in the sentiment of this last air; and we lost it in the light and fantastic movements of Mons. DROUET's execution. He belongs, we apprehend, to that class of musicians, whose ears are at their fingers' ends; but he is perhaps at the head. We profess, however, to be very ignorant in these matters, and speak under correction.

RICHARD III.

April 20, 1816.

The Managers of Covent-Garden Theatre have treated the public with two new Richards this season, Mr. Edwards, and Mr. Cobham. The first, his own good sense and modesty induced to withdraw, after the disapprobation of the public had been expressed on his first trial. Mr. Cobham, who is not "made of penetrable stuff," intends, we understand, to face the public out in the character. This is an experiment which will never answer. We shall take good care, however, not to be present at the fray. We do not blame Mr. Cobham for the mortification and disappointment which we have received, but the Managers. Self-knowledge is a rare acquisition; but criticism upon others is a very easy task; and the Managers need merely have perceived as much of the matter as was obvious to every common spectator from the first

moment of this actor's coming on, to know that it was quite impossible he should get through the part with ordinary decency. The only scene that was tolerable was the meeting with Lady Anne. But for his Richard—(Heaven save the mark)—it was a vile one—"unhousell'd, unanointed, unaneal'd, with all his imperfections on his head." Not that this actor is without the physical requisites to play Richard: he raved, whined, grinned, stared, stamped, and rolled his eyes with incredible velocity, and all in the right place according to his cue, but in so extravagant and disjointed a manner, and with such a total want of common sense, decorum, or conception of the character, as to be perfectly ridiculous. We suspect that he has a wrong theory of his art. He has taken a lesson from Mr. KEAN, whom he caricatures, and seems to suppose that to be familiar or violent is natural, and that to be natural is the perfection of acting. And so it is, if properly understood. But to play Richard naturally, is to play it as Richard would play it, not as Mr. COBHAM would play it; he comes there to shew us not himself, but the tyrant and the king—not what he would do, but what another would do in such circumstances. Before he can do this he must become that other, and cease to be himself. Dignity is natural to certain stations, and grandeur of expression to certain feelings. In art, nature

cannot exist without the highest art; it is a pure effort of the imagination, which throws the mind out of itself into the supposed situation of others, and enables it to feel and act there as if it were at home. The real Richard and the real Mr. COBHAM are quite different things.

BUT we are glad to have done with this subject, and proceed to a more grateful one, which is to notice the Sir Pertinax Mac Sycophant of a Gentleman whose name has not yet been announced*. We have no hesitation in pronouncing him an acquisition to this Theatre. To compare him with COOKE in this character would be idle; for it was COOKE's very best character, and COOKE was one of the very best actors we have had on the stage. But he played the character throughout without a single failure, and with great judgment, great spirit, and great effect. In the scenes with Egerton, where he gives a loose to his natural feelings, he expressed all the turbulence and irritation of his mind without losing sight of his habitual character or external demeanour. He has a great deal of that assumed decorum and imposing stateliness of manner, which, since the days of JACK PALMER, has been a desideratum on the stage. In

* A Mr. Bibby, from the United States.

short, we have had no one who looked at home in a full dress coat and breeches. Besides the more obvious requisites for the stage, the bye-play of the new actor is often excellent: his eye points what he is going to say; he has a very significant smile, and a very alarming shrug with his shoulders. The only objection that we have to make is to the too frequent repetition of a certain motion with the hands which may easily be avoided.

During a part of the representation there was some opposition most absurdly manifested: partly from its being Easter week, partly from persons who did not understand Scotch, and still more, we apprehend, from those who did. Sir Pertinax has always been an obnoxious *up-hill* character, and hazardous to a debutant. We see no reason for this on a London stage. The Irish say, that we laugh at them on the stage: why then should we not laugh at the Scotch? The answer is—that we laugh at the Irish, to be sure, but we do not make them odious.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

April 27, 1816.

Romeo and Juliet was played at Drury-Lane to introduce a new candidate for public favour, Miss Graham, as Juliet, and to show off a very old one, Mr. Rae as Romeo. This lady has one qualification for playing the part of Juliet which is, that she is very pretty; but we are afraid that's all. Her voice in common speaking is thin and lisping, and when she raises it, it becomes harsh and unmanageable, as if she had learned to speak of ——————. We cannot however pretend to say how far her timidity might interfere with the display of her powers. Mr. Rae cannot plead the same excuse of modesty for the faults of his acting. Between the tragi-comedy of his voice and the drollery of his action, we were exceedingly amused. His manner of saying, "How silver sweet sound lovers' tongues by night," was more like "the midnight

bell that with his iron tongue and brazen mouth sounds one unto the drowsy race of night;" and his hurried mode of getting over the description of the Apothecary, was as if a person should be hired to repeat this speech after ten miles hard riding on a high trotting horse. When this "gentle tassel" is lured back in the garden by his Juliet's voice, he returns at full speed, like a harlequin going to take a flying leap through a trap-door. This was, we suppose, to give us an allegorical idea of his being borne on the wings of love, but we could discover neither his wings nor his love. The rest of the play was very indifferently got up, except the Nurse by Mrs. SPARKS.

After the play, we had GARRICK'S Ode on SHAKESPEAR, and a procession of SHAKESPEAR'S characters in dumb-show. Mr. POPE recited the Ode, and personated the Genius of SHAKESPEAR as the Wool-sack personates the Prince Regent. "Vesuvius in an eruption, was not more violent than his utterance, not Pelion with all his pine-trees in a storm of wind more impetuous than his action: and yet Drury-Lane still stands." We have here used the words of GRAY, in describing a University Orator at a Cambridge Installation. The result, as given by the poet, was more agreeable than in the present instance.—"I was ready to sink for him, and scarce dared look about me, when I was

sure it was all over: but soon I found I might have spared my confusion: all people joined to applaud him. Every thing was quite right, and I dare swear not three people here but think him a model of oratory: for all the Duke's little court came with a resolution to be pleased: and when the tone was once given, the University, who ever wait for the judgment of their betters, struck into it with an admirable harmony; for the rest of the performances, they were just what they usually are. Every one, while it lasted, was very gay and very busy in the morning, and very owlish and very tipsy at night: I make no exceptions from the Chancellor to Blue-coat."

Mr. Pope did not get off so well as the Cambridge Orator, for Garrick's Ode "was sung, but broke off in the middle" by the shouts and laughter of the audience, less well-bred than the grave assembly above described: nor was any one in the situation of the Chancellor or Blue-coat. We are free to confess, that we think the recitation of an Ode requires the assistance of good eating and drinking to carry it off; and this is perhaps the reason that there is such good eating and drinking at our Universities, where the reciting of Odes and other formal productions is common.

After the Ode, the Mulberry Tree was sung by Mr. Pyne and Mr. Smith, not in the garden,

but in the street, before the house where SHAKESPEAR was born. This violation of the unity of place confounded the sentiment, nor was the uncertainty cleared up by a rabble of attendants, (more unintelligible than the Chorus of the ancients), who resembled neither waiters with tavern bills in their hands, nor musicians with their scores.

The singing being over, the procession of Characters commenced, and we were afraid would have ended fatally; for Mrs. BARTLEY, as the Tragic Muse, was nearly upset by the breaking down of her car. We cannot go through the detail of this wretched burlesque. Mr. STOTHARD's late picture of the Characters of SHAKESPEAR was ingenious and satisfactory, because the figures seen together made picturesque groups, because painting presents but one moment of action, and because it is necessarily in dumb show. But this exhibition seemed intended as a travestie, to take off all the charm and the effect of the ideas associated with the several characters. It has satisfied us of the reality of dramatic illusion, by shewing the effect of such an exhibition entirely stripped of it. For example, Juliet is wheeled on in her tomb, which is broken open by her lover: she awakes, the tomb then moves forward, and Mr. S. PENley, not knowing what to do, throws himself upon the bier, and is wheeled off with her.

POPE and BARNARD come on as Lear and Mad Tom. They sit down on the ground, and POPE steals a crown of straw from his companion: Mad Tom then starts up, runs off the stage, and POPE after him, like Pantaloon in pursuit of the Clown. This is fulsome. We did not stay to see it out; and one consolation is, that we shall not be alive another century to see it repeated.

MR. KEMBLE'S SIR GILES OVERREACH.

May 4, 1816.

Why they put Mr. KEMBLE into the part of Sir Giles Overreach, at Covent-Garden Theatre, we cannot conceive: we should suppose he would not put himself there. Malvolio, though cross-gartered, did not set himself in the stocks. No doubt, it is the Managers' doing, who by rope-dancing, fire-works, play-bill puffs, and by every kind of quackery, seem determined to fill their pockets for the present, and disgust the public in the end, if the public were an animal capable of being disgusted by quackery. But

> "Doubtless the pleasure is as great
> "In being cheated as to cheat."

We do not know why we promised last week to give some account of Mr. KEMBLE's Sir Giles, except that we dreaded the task then; and certainly our reluctance to speak on this subject has

not decreased, the more we have thought upon it since. We have hardly ever experienced a more painful feeling than when, after the close of the play, the sanguine plaudits of Mr. KEMBLE's friends, and the circular discharge of hisses from the back of the pit, that came "full volly home,"—the music struck up, the ropes were fixed, and Madame SACHI ran up from the stage to the two-shilling gallery, and then ran down again, as fast as her legs could carry her, amidst the shouts of pit, boxes, and gallery!

> "So fails, so languishes, and dies away
> "All that this world is proud of. So
> "Perish the roses and the crowns of kings,
> "Sceptres and palms of all the mighty."

We have here marred some fine lines of Mr. WORDSWORTH on the instability of human greatness, but it is no matter: for he does not seem to understand the sentiment himself. Mr. KEMBLE, then, having been thrust into the part, as we suppose, against his will, run the gauntlet of public opinion in it with a firmness and resignation worthy of a Confessor. He did not once shrink from his duty, nor make one effort to redeem his reputation, by "affecting a virtue when he knew he had it not." He seemed throughout to say to his instigators, *You have thrust me into this part, help me out of it, if you can; for you see I cannot help myself.* We

never saw signs of greater poverty, greater imbecility and decrepitude in Mr. KEMBLE, or in any other actor: it was Sir Giles in his dotage. It was all "Well, well," and, "If you like it, have it so," an indifference and disdain of what was to happen, a nicety about his means, a coldness as to his ends, much gentility and little nature. Was this Sir Giles Overreach? Nothing could be more quaint and out-of-the-way. Mr. KEMBLE wanted the part to come to him, for he would not go out of his way to the part. He is, in fact, as shy of committing himself with nature, as a maid is of committing herself with a lover. All the proper forms and ceremonies must be complied with, before "they two can be made one flesh." Mr. KEMBLE sacrifices too much to decorum. He is chiefly afraid of being contaminated by too close an identity with the characters he represents. This is the greatest vice in an actor, who ought never to *balk* his part. He endeavours to raise Nature to the dignity of his own person and demeanour, and declines with a graceful smile and a waive of the hand, the ordinary services she might do him. We would advise him by all means to shake hands, to hug her close, and be friends, if we did not suspect it was too late—that the lady, owing to this coyness, has eloped, and is now in the situation of Dame Hellenore among the Satyrs.

The outrageousness of the conduct of Sir

Giles is only to be excused by the violence of his passions, and the turbulence of his character. Mr. KEMBLE inverted this conception, and attempted to reconcile the character, by softening down the action. He "aggravated the part so, that he would seem like any sucking dove." For example, nothing could exceed the coolness and *sang-froid* with which he raps Marall on the head with his cane, or spits at Lord Lovell: Lord Foppington himself never did any commonplace indecency more insipidly. The only passage that pleased us, or that really called forth the powers of the actor, was his reproach to Mr. Justice Greedy: "There is some fury in that *Out*." The indignity of the word called up all the dignity of the actor to meet it, and he guaranteed the word, though "a word of naught," according to the letter and spirit of the convention between them, with a good grace, in the true old English way. Either we mistake all Mr. KEMBLE'S excellences, or they all disqualify him for this part. Sir Giles *hath a devil;* Mr. KEMBLE has none. Sir Giles is in a passion; Mr. Kemble is not. Sir Giles has no regard to appearances; Mr. KEMBLE has. It has been said of the Venus de Medicis, "So stands the statue that enchants the world;" the same might have been said of Mr. KEMBLE. He is the very still-life and statuary of the stage; a perfect figure of a man; a petrifaction of sentiment, that

heaves no sigh, and sheds no tear; an icicle upon the bust of Tragedy. With all his faults, he has powers and faculties which no one else on the stage has; why then does he not avail himself of them, instead of throwing himself upon the charity of criticism? Mr. KEMBLE has given the public great, incalculable pleasure; and does he know so little of the gratitude of the world as to trust to their generosity?

BERTRAM.

May 18, 1816.

The new tragedy of Bertram at Drury-Lane Theatre has entirely succeeded, and it has sufficient merit to deserve the success it has met with. We had read it before we saw it, and it on the whole disappointed us in the representation. Its beauties are rather those of language and sentiment than of action or situation. The interest flags very much during the last act, where the whole plot is known and inevitable. What it has of stage-effect is scenic and extraneous, as the view of the sea in a storm, the chorus of knights, &c. instead of arising out of the business of the play. We also object to the trick of introducing the little child twice to untie the knot of the catastrophe. One of these fantoccini exhibitions in the course of a tragedy is quite enough.

The general fault of this tragedy, and of other

modern tragedies that we could mention, is, that it is a tragedy without business. Aristotle, we believe, defines tragedy to be the representation of *a serious action.* Now here there is no action: there is neither cause nor effect. There is a want of that necessary connection between what happens, what is said, and what is done, in which we take the essence of dramatic invention to consist. It is a sentimental drama, it is a romantic drama, but it is not a tragedy, in the best sense of the word. That is to say, the passion described does not arise naturally out of the previous circumstances, nor lead necessarily to the consequences that follow. Mere sentiment is voluntary, fantastic, self-created, beginning and ending in itself; true passion is natural, irresistible, produced by powerful causes, and impelling the will to determinate actions. The old tragedy, if we understand it, is a display of the affections of the heart and the energies of the will; the modern romantic tragedy is a mixture of fanciful exaggeration and indolent sensibility; the former is founded on real calamities and real purposes; the latter courts distress, affects horror, indulges in all the luxury of woe, and nurses its languid thoughts, and dainty sympathies, to fill up the void of action. As the opera is filled with a sort of singing people, who translate every thing into music, the modern drama is filled with poets and their mistresses, who

translate every thing into metaphor and sentiment. Bertram falls under this censure. It is a Winter's Tale, a Midsummer Night's Dream, but it is not Lear or Macbeth. The poet does not describe what his characters would feel in given circumstances, but lends them his own thoughts and feelings out of his general reflections on human nature, or general observation of certain objects. In a word, we hold for a truth, that a thoroughly good tragedy is an impossibility in a state of manners and literature where the poet and philosopher have got the better of the man; where the reality does not mould the imagination, but the imagination glosses over the reality; and where the unexpected stroke of true calamity, the biting edge of true passion, is blunted, sheathed, and lost, amidst the flowers of poetry strewed over unreal, unfelt distress, and the flimsy topics of artificial humanity prepared beforehand for all occasions. We are tired of this long-spun analysis; take an example:

" SCENE V.

" *A Gothic Apartment.*

" *Imogine discovered sitting at a Table looking at a Picture.*

" *Imogine.* Yes,
" The limner's art may trace the absent feature,
" And give the eye of distant weeping faith
" To view the form of its idolatry:

" But oh! the scenes 'mid which they met and parted—
" The thoughts, the recollections sweet and bitter—
" Th' Elysian dreams of lovers, when they loved—
" Who shall restore them?
" Less lovely are the fugitive clouds of eve,
" And not more vanishing—if thou couldst speak,
" Dumb witness of the secret soul of Imogine,
" Thou might'st acquit the faith of woman kind—
" Since thou wert on my midnight pillow laid,
" Friend hath forsaken friend—the brotherly tie
" Been lightly loosed—the parted coldly met—
" Yea, mothers have with desperate hands wrought harm
" To little lives which their own bosoms lent.
" But woman still hath loved — if that indeed
" Woman e'er loved like me."

This is very beautiful and affecting writing. The reader would suppose that it related to events woven into the web of the history; but no such thing. It is a purely voluntary or poetical fiction of possible calamity, arising out of the experience of the author, not of the heroine.

The whole of the character of Clotilda, her confidante, who enters immediately after, is superfluous. She merely serves for the heroine to vent the moods of her own mind upon, and to break her enthusiastic soliloquies into the appearance of a dialogue. There is no reason in the world for the confidence thus reposed in Clotilda, with respect to her love for the outlawed Bertram, but the eternal desire of talking. Neither does she at all explain the grounds of her

marriage to Aldobrand, who her father was, or how his distresses induced her to renounce her former lover. The whole is an effusion of tender sentiments, sometimes very good and fine, but of which we neither know the origin, the circumstances, nor the object; for her passion for Bertram does not lead to any thing but the promise of an interview to part for ever, which promise is itself broken. Among other fine lines describing the situation of Imogine's mind, are the following:

"And yet some sorcery was wrought on me,
"For earlier things do seem as yesterday;
"But I've no recollection of the hour
"They gave my hand to Aldobrand."

Perhaps these lines would be more natural if spoken of the lady than by her. The descriptive style will allow things to be supposed or said of others, which cannot so well be believed or said by them. There is also a want of dramatic decorum in Bertram's description of a monastic life addressed to the Prior. It should be a solitary reflection.

"Yea, thus they live, if this may life be called,
"Where moving shadows mock the parts of men.
"Prayer follows study, study yields to' prayer—
"Bell echoes bell, till wearied with the summons,
"The ear doth ache for that last welcome peal
"That tolls an end to listless vacancy."

That part of the play where the chief interest should lie, namely, in the scenes preceding the death of Aldobrand, is without any interest at all, from the nature of the plot; for there is nothing left either to hope or to fear; and not only is there no possibility of good, but there is not even a choice of evils. The struggle of Imogine is a mere alternation of senseless exclamations. Her declaring of her husband, "By heaven and all its hosts, he shall not perish," is downright rant. She has no power to prevent his death; she has no power even to will his safety, for he is armed with what she deems an unjust power over the life of Bertram, and the whole interest of the play centres in her love for this Bertram. Opposite interests destroy one another in the drama, like opposite forces in mechanics. The situation of Belvidera in Venice Preserved, where the love to her father or her husband must be sacrificed, is quite different, for she not only hopes to reconcile them, but actually does reconcile them. The speech of Bertram to the Knights after he has killed Aldobrand, and his drawing off the dead body, to contemplate it alone, have been much admired, and there is certainly something grand and impressive in the first suggestion of the idea; but we do not believe it is in nature. We will venture a conjecture, that it is formed on a false analogy to two other ideas, viz. to that of a wild beast carrying

off its prey with it to its den, and to the story which FUSELI has painted, of a man sitting over the corpse of his murdered wife. Now we can conceive that a man might wish to feast his eyes on the dead body of a person whom he had loved, and conceive that there was no one else "but they two left alone in the world," but not that any one would have this feeling with respect to an enemy whom he had killed.

Mr. KEAN as Bertram did several things finely; what we liked most was his delivery of the speech, "The wretched have no country." Miss SOMERVILLE as Imogine was exceedingly interesting; she put us in mind of HOGARTH's Sigismunda. She is tall and elegant, and her face is good, with some irregularities. Her voice is powerful, and her tones romantic. Her mode of repeating the line,

"Th' Elysian dreams of lovers, *when they loved*,"

had the true poetico-metaphysical cadence, as if the sound and the sentiment would linger for ever on the ear. She might sit for the picture of a heroine of romance, whether with her form

"————————decked in purple and in pall,
"When she goes forth, and thronging vassals kneel,
"And bending pages bear her footcloth well;"

or whether the eye

"————beholds that lady in her bower,
"That is her hour of joy; for then she weeps,
"Nor does her husband hear!"

Bertram, or the Castle of St. Aldobrand, is written by an Irish Clergyman, whose name is MATURIN. It is said to be his first successful production; we sincerely hope it will not be the last.

ADELAIDE, OR THE EMIGRANTS.

Covent-Garden, May 25, 1816.

A TRAGEDY, to succeed, should be either legi- His formly excellent or uniformly dull. Eithe and do almost equally well. We are convinced t. it would be possible to write a tragedy which should be a tissue of unintelligible common-places from beginning to end, in which not one word that is *said* shall be understood by the audience, and yet, provided appearances are saved, and nothing is *done* to trip up the heels of the imposture, it would go down. Adelaide, or the Emigrants, is an instance in point. If there had been one good passage in this play, it would infallibly have been damned. But it was all of a piece; one absurdity justified another. The first scene was like the second, the second act no worse than the first, the third like the second, and so on to the end. The mind accommodates itself to circumstances. The author

never once roused the indignation of his hearers by the disappointment of their expectations. He startled the slumbering furies of the pit by no dangerous inequalities. We were quite resigned by the middle of the third simile, and equally thankful when the whole was over. The language of this tragedy is made up of nonsense and indecency. Mixed metaphors abound in it. The "torrent of passion rolls *along* precipices;" pleasure is said to gleam u[illegible] "like moss upon the desolate rock;" the death of a hero is compared to the peak of a mountain set[illegible] seas of glory, or some such dreadful [illegible], built up with ladders and scaffolding. [illegible]en the thunder and lightning are mingled with bursts of fury and revenge in inextricable confusion; there are such unmeaning phrases as *contagious gentleness*, and the heroes and the heroine, in their transports, as a common practice, set both worlds at defiance.

The plot of this play is bad, for it is unintelligible in a great measure, and where it is not unintelligible, absurd. Count Lunenburg cannot marry Adelaide because "his Emperor's frown" has forbidden his marriage with the daughter of an Emigrant Nobleman; and so, to avoid this imperial frown, he betrays her into a pretended marriage, and thus intends to divide his time between war and a mistress. Hence all the distress and mischiefs which en-

sue; and though the morality of the affair is characteristic enough of the old school, yet neither the Emperor's frown nor the Count's levity seem sufficient reasons for harrowing up the feelings in the manner proposed by the author, and plunging us into the horrors of the French Revolution at the same time. The exiled St. Evremond saw "his lawful monarch's bleeding head, and yet he prayed;" he saw "his castle walls crumbled into ashes by the devouring flames, and yet he prayed:" but when he finds his daughter betrayed by one of his legitimate friends, he can "pray no more." His wife, the Countess, takes some comfort, and she builds her hope on a word, which, she says, is of great virtue, the word, "perhaps." "It is the word which the slave utters as he stands upon the western shores, and looks towards Afric's climes—*Perhaps!*"—Of the attention paid to costume, some idea may be formed by the circumstance, that in the church-yard where the catastrophe takes place, the inscriptions on the tomb-stones are all in German, though the people speak English. The rest is in the same style. The *Emigrants* is a political attempt to drench an English audience with French loyalty: now, French loyalty to the House of Bourbon, is a thing as little to our taste as Scotch loyalty to the House of Stuart; and when we find our political quacks preparing to pour their

nauseous trash with false labels down our throats, we must "throw it to the dogs: we'll none of it."

Mr. YOUNG, as the injured Count, raved without meaning, and grew light-headed with great deliberation. CHARLES KEMBLE, in tragedy, only spoils a good face. Mr. MURRAY, as the old servant of the family, was "as good as a prologue," and his helpless horror at what is going forward exceedingly amusing.

Miss O'NEILL's Adelaide, which we suppose was intended to be the chief attraction of the piece, was to us the most unpleasant part of it. She has powers which ought not to be thrown away, and yet she trifles with them. She wastes them equally on genteel comedy and vulgar tragedy. Her acting in Adelaide, which in other circumstances might have been impressive, was to us repulsive. The agonizing passion she expressed, required that our feelings should be wound up to the highest pitch, either by the imagination of the poet or the interest of the story, to meet it on equal terms. We are not in an ordinary mood prepared for the shrieks of mandrakes, for the rattles in the throat, for looks that drive the thoughts to madness. Miss O'NEILL's acting is pure nature or passion: it is the prose of tragedy; for the poetry she must lean on her author. But strong passion must be invested with imagination by some

one, either by the poet or the actor, before it can give delight, not to say, before it can be endured by the public. Her manner in the scene where she asks Lunenberg about her marriage, was much the same as when Monimia asks Polydore, "Where did you rest last night?" Yet how different was the effect! in the one, her frantic eagerness only corresponded with the interest already excited; in the other, it shocked, because no interest had been excited. Miss O'Neill fills better than any one else the part assigned her by the author, but she does not *make* it, nor over-inform it with qualities which she is not bound to bring. She is, therefore, more dependent than any one else upon the character she has to represent; and as she originally owes her reputation to her powers of sensibility, she will perhaps owe its ultimate continuance to the cultivation of her taste in the choice of the characters in which she appears. The public are jealous of their favourites!

EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR.

June 8, 1816.

Mr. Kean had for his benefit at Drury-Lane Theatre, on Wednesday, the Comedy of Every Man in his Humour. This play acts much better than it reads. It has been observed of Ben Jonson, that he painted not so much human nature as temporary manners, not the characters of men, but their *humours*, that is to say, peculiarities of phrase, modes of dress, gesture, &c. which becoming obsolete, and being in themselves altogether arbitrary and fantastical, have become unintelligible and uninteresting. Brainworm is a particularly dry and abstruse character. We neither know his business nor his motives; his plots are as intricate as they are useless, and as the ignorance of those he imposes upon is wonderful. This is the impression in reading it. Yet from the bustle and activity of this character on the stage, the changes

of dress, the variety of affected tones and gipsey jargon, and the limping, distorted gestures, it is a very amusing exhibition, as Mr. MUNDEN plays it. Bobadil is the only actually striking character in the play, or which tells equally in the closet and the theatre. The rest, Master Matthew, Master Stephen, Cob and Cob's Wife, were living in the sixteenth century. But from the very oddity of their appearance and behaviour, they have a very droll and even picturesque effect when acted. It seems a revival of the dead. We believe in their existence when we see them. As an example of the power of the stage in giving reality and interest to what otherwise would be without it, we might mention the scene in which Brainworm praises Master Stephen's leg. The folly here is insipid, from its seeming carried to an excess,—till we see it; and then we laugh the more at it, the more incredible we thought it before.

The pathos in the principal character, Kitely, is "as dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage." There is, however, a certain good sense, discrimination, or *logic of passion* in the part, which Mr. KEAN pointed in such a way as to give considerable force to it. In the scene where he is about to confide the secret of his jealousy to his servant, Thomas, he was exceedingly happy in the working himself up to the execu-

tion of his design, and in the repeated failure of his resolution. The reconciliation-scene with his wife had great spirit, where he tells her, to shew his confidence, that "she may sing, may go to balls, may dance," and the interruption of this sudden tide of concession with the restriction—"though I had rather you did not do all this"—was a master-stroke. It was perhaps the first time a parenthesis was ever spoken on the stage as it ought to be. Mr. KEAN certainly often repeats this artifice of abrupt transition in the tones in which he expresses different passions, and still it always pleases,—we suppose, because it is natural. This gentleman is not only a good actor in himself, but he is the cause of good acting in others. The whole play was got up very effectually. Considerable praise is due to the industry and talent shewn by Mr. HARLEY, in Captain Bobadil. He did his best in it, and that was not ill. He delivered the Captain's well-known proposal for the pacification of Europe, by killing twenty of them each his man a day, with good emphasis and discretion. Bobadil is undoubtedly the hero of the piece; his extravagant affectation carries the sympathy of the audience along with it, and his final defeat and exposure, though exceedingly humorous, is the only affecting circumstance in the play. Mr. HARLEY's fault in this and other characters is, that he too frequently as-

sumes mechanical expressions of countenance and bye-tones of humour, which have not any thing to do with the individual part. Mr. HUGHES personified Master Matthew to the life: he appeared "like a man made after supper of a cheese-paring." MUNDEN did Brainworm with laudable alacrity. OXBERRY's Master Stephen was very happily hit off; nobody plays the traditional fool of the English stage so well; he seems not only foolish, but fond of folly. The two young gentlemen, Master Well-bred and Master Edward Knowell, were the only insipid characters.

MRS. SIDDONS.

June 15, 1816.

Players should be immortal, if their own wishes or ours could make them so; but they are not. They not only die like other people, but like other people they cease to be young, and are no longer themselves, even while living. Their health, strength, beauty, voice, fails them; nor can they, without these advantages, perform the same feats, or command the same applause that they did when possessed of them. It is the common lot: players are only *not* exempt from it. Mrs. Siddons retired once from the stage: why should she return to it again? She cannot retire from it twice with dignity; and yet it is to be wished that she should do all things with dignity. Any loss of reputation to her, is a loss to the world. Has she not had enough of glory? The homage she has received is greater than that which is paid to Queens. The enthusiasm she

she excited had something idolatrous about it; she was regarded less with admiration than with wonder, as if a being of a superior order had dropped from another sphere to awe the world with the majesty of her appearance. She raised Tragedy to the skies, or brought it down from thence. It was something above nature. We can conceive of nothing grander. She embodied to our imagination the fables of mythology, of the heroic and deified mortals of elder time. She was not less than a goddess, or than a prophetess inspired by the gods. Power was seated on her brow, passion emanated from her breast as from a shrine. She was Tragedy personified. She was the stateliest ornament of the public mind. She was not only the idol of the people, she not only hushed the tumultuous shouts of the pit in breathless expectation, and quenched the blaze of surrounding beauty in silent tears, but to the retired and lonely student, through long years of solitude, her face has shone as if an eye had appeared from heaven; her name has been as if a voice had opened the chambers of the human heart, or as if a trumpet had awakened the sleeping and the dead. To have seen Mrs. Siddons, was an event in every one's life; and does she think we have forgot her? Or would she remind us of herself by shewing us what *she was not?* Or is she to continue on the stage to the very last, till all her

grace and all her grandeur gone, shall leave behind them only a melancholy blank? Or is she merely to be played off as "the baby of a girl" for a few nights?—"Rather than so," come, Genius of Gil Blas, thou that didst inspire him in an evil hour to perform his promise to the Archbishop of Grenada, "and champion us to the utterance" of what we think on this occasion.

It is said that the Princess CHARLOTTE has expressed a desire to see Mrs. SIDDONS in her best parts, and this, it is said, is a thing highly desirable. We do not know that the Princess has expressed any such wish, and we shall suppose that she has not, because we do not think it altogether a reasonable one. If the Princess CHARLOTTE had expressed a wish to see Mr. GARRICK, this would have been a thing highly desirable, but it would have been impossible; or if she had desired to see Mrs. SIDDONS *in her best days*, it would have been equally so; and yet without this, we do not think it desirable that she should see her at all. It is said to be desirable that a Princess should have a taste for the Fine Arts, and that this is best promoted by seeing the highest models of perfection. But it is of the first importance for Princes to acquire a taste for what is reasonable: and the second thing which it is desirable they should acquire, is a deference to public opinion: and we think neither of these objects likely to be promoted in

the way proposed. If it was reasonable that Mrs. Siddons should retire from the stage three years ago, certainly those reasons have not diminished since, nor do we think Mrs. Siddons would consult what is due to her powers or her fame, in commencing a new career. If it is only intended that she should act a few nights in the presence of a particular person, this might be done as well in private. To all other applications she should answer—"Leave me to my repose."

Mrs. Siddons always spoke as slow as she ought: she now speaks slower than she did. "The line too labours, and the words move slow." The machinery of the voice seems too ponderous for the power that wields it. There is too long a pause between each sentence, and between each word in each sentence. There is too much preparation. The stage waits for her. In the sleeping scene, she produced a different impression from what we expected. It was more laboured, and less natural. In coming on formerly, her eyes were open, but the sense was shut. She was like a person bewildered, and unconscious of what she did. She moved her lips involuntarily; all her gestures were involuntary and mechanical. At present she acts the part more with a view to effect. She repeats the action when she says, "I tell you he cannot rise from his grave," with both hands

sawing the air, in the style of parliamentary oratory, the worst of all others. There was none of this weight or energy in the way she did the scene the first time we saw her, twenty years ago. She glided on and off the stage almost like an apparition. In the close of the banquet scene, Mrs. SIDDONS condescended to an imitation which we were sorry for. She said, "Go, go," in the hurried familiar tone of common life, in the manner of Mr. KEAN, and without any of that sustained and graceful spirit of conciliation towards her guests, which used to characterise her mode of doing it. Lastly, if Mrs. SIDDONS has to leave the stage again, Mr. HORACE TWISS will write another farewell address for her; if she continues on it, we shall have to criticise her performances. We know which of these two evils we shall think the greatest.

Too much praise cannot be given to Mr. KEMBLE'S performance of Macbeth. He was "himself again," and more than himself. His action was decided, his voice audible. His tones had occasionally indeed a learned quaintness, like the colouring of POUSSIN; but the effect of the whole was fine. His action in delivering the speech, "To-morrow and to-morrow," was particularly striking and expressive, as if he had stumbled by an accident on fate, and was baffled by the impenetrable obscurity of the future.—In that prodigious prosing paper, the Times, which seems to

be written as well as printed by a steam-engine, Mr. KEMBLE is compared to the ruin of a magnificent temple, in which the divinity still resides. This is not the case. The temple is unimpaired; but the divinity is sometimes from home.

NEW ENGLISH OPERA-HOUSE.

June 2, 1816.

The New English Opera-House (late the Lyceum Theatre) in the Strand, opened on Saturday week. The carpenters are but just got out of it; and in our opinion they have made but an indifferent piece of work of it. It consists of lobbies and vacant spaces. The three tiers of boxes are raised so high above one another, that the house would look empty even if it were full, and at present it is not full, but empty. The second gallery, for fear of its crowding on the first, is thrown back to such an unconscionable height, that it seems like a balcony projecting from some other building, where the spectators do not pay for peeping. All this no doubt promotes the circulation of air, and keeps the Theatre cool and comfortable. Mr. Arnold's philosophy may be right, but our prejudices are strongly against it. Our notions of

a summer theatre are, that it should look *smoking hot*, and feel more like a warm bath than a well. We like to see a summer theatre as crowded as a winter one, so that a breath of air is a luxury. We like to see the well-dressed company in the boxes languidly silent, and to hear the Gods noisy and quarrelling for want of room and breath—the cries of "Throw him over!" becoming more loud and frequent as the weather gets farther on into the dog-days. We like all this, because we are used to it, and are as obstinately attached to old abuses in matters of amusement, as kings, judges, and legislators are in state affairs.

The New Theatre opened with Up all Night, or the Smugglers' Cave; a piece admirably well adapted as a succedaneum for keeping the house cool and airy. The third night there was nobody there. To say the truth, we never saw a duller performance. The Actors whom the Manager has got together, are both new and strange. They are most of them recruits from the country, and of that description which is known by the vulgar appellation of the *awkward squad*. Mr. Russell (from Edinburgh, not our old friend Jerry Sneak) is the only one amongst them who understands his exercise. Mr. Short and Mr. Isaacs are singers, and we fear not good ones. Mr. Short has white teeth, and Mr. Isaacs black eyes. We do not like the name of Mr.

Huckel. There is also a Mrs. Henley, who plays the fat Landlady in the Beehive, of the size of life.—Mr. Lancaster, who played Filch in the Beggars' Opera, and Mrs. W. Penson, who played the part of Lucy Lockitt tolerably, and looked it intolerably well. There is also Mr. Bartley, who is Stage-manager, and who threatens to be very prominent this season. There is also, from the old corps, Wrench, the easiest of actors; and there is Fanny Kelly, who after all, is not herself a whole company. We miss little Knight, and several other of our summer friends.

The Winter Theatres.—We must, we suppose, for the present, take our leave of the winter performances. We lately saw at Covent-Garden Mr. Emery's Robert Tyke, in the School of Reform, of which we had heard a good deal, and which fully justified all that we had heard of its excellence. It is one of the most natural and powerful pieces of acting on the stage; it is the sublime of low tragedy. We should like to see any body do it better. The scene where, being brought before Lord Avondale as a robber, he discovers him to have been formerly an accomplice in villainy; that in which he gives an account of the death of his

father, and goes off the stage calling for "Brandy, brandy!" and that in which he finds this same father, whom he had supposed dead, alive again, are, in our judgment, master-pieces both of pathos and grandeur. We do not think all excellence is confined to walking upon stilts. We conceive that Mr. EMERY shewed about as much genius in this part, which he performed for his benefit, as Mr. LISTON did afterwards in singing the song of Ti, tum, ti; we cannot say more of it. Genius appears to us to be a very *unclassical* quality. There is but a little of it in the world, but what there is, is always unlike itself and every thing else. Your imitators of the tragic, epic, and grand style, may be multiplied to any extent, as we raise regiments of grenadiers.

Mrs. MARDYN, after an absence of some weeks, has appeared again at Drury-Lane, in the new part of the Irish Widow, the charming Widow Brady; and a most delightful representative she made of her—full of life and spirit, well-made, handsome, and good-natured. If it is a fault to be handsome, Mrs. MARDYN certainly deserves to be hissed off the stage.

THE JEALOUS WIFE.

June 29, 1816.

THE performances at Drury-Lane Theatre closed for the season on Friday evening last, with the Jealous Wife, Sylvester Daggerwood, and the Mayor of Garratt. After the play Mr. RAE came forward, [illegible]d in a neat address, not ill delivered, returned [illegible]nks to the public, in the name of the Manag[illegible]and Performers, for the success with which [illegible]ir endeavours to afford rational amusement and to sustain the legitimate drama, had been attended.

The play-bills had announced Mrs. DAVISON for the part of Mrs. Oakley, in the Jealous Wife. We have seen nothing of this Lady of late, except when she personated the Comic Muse (for one night only), on the second centenary of SHAKESPEAR's death. The glimpses we catch of her are, in one sense,

"Like angels' visits, short, and far between."

She was absent on the present occasion, and Mrs. GLOVER took the part of the well-drawn heroine of COLMAN's amusing and very instructive comedy. Mrs. GLOVER was not quite at home in the part. She represented the passions of the woman, but not the manners of the fine lady. She succeeds best in grave or violent parts, and has very little of the playful or delicate in her acting. If we were to hazard a general epithet for her style of performing, we should say that it amounts to the *formidable;* her expression of passion is too hysterical, and habitually reminds one of hartshorn and water. On great occasions, she displays the fury of a lioness who has lost her young, and in playing a queen or princess, deluges the theatre with her voice. Her Quaker in Wild Oats, on the contrary, is an inimitable piece of quiet acting. The demureness of the character, which takes away all temptation to be boisterous, leaves the justness of her conception in full force: and the simplicity of her Quaker dress is most agreeably relieved by the *embonpoint* of her person.

The comedy of the Jealous Wife was not upon the whole so well cast here as at Covent-Garden. MUNDEN's Sir Harry Beagle was not to our taste. It was vulgarity in double-heaped measure. The part itself is a gross caricature, and MUNDEN's playing caricature is something like *carrying coals to Newcastle.* RUSSELL's

Lord Trinket was also a failure: he can only play a modern jockey Nobleman: Lord Trinket is a fop of the old school.

Mr. HARLEY played Sylvester Daggerwood, in the entertainment which followed, well enough to make us regret our old favourite BANNISTER, and attempted some imitations, (one of MATHEWS in particular) which were pleasant and lively, but not very like.

The acting of DOWTON and RUSSELL, in Major Sturgeon and Jerry Sneak, is well known to our readers: at least we would advise all those who have not seen it, to go and see this perfect exhibition of comic talent. The strut, the bluster, the hollow swaggering, and turkey-cock swell of the Major, and Jerry's meekness, meanness, folly, good-nature, and hen-pecked air, are assuredly done to the life. The latter character is even better than the former, which is saying a bold word. DOWTON's art is only an imitation of art, of an affected or assumed character; but in RUSSELL's Jerry you see the very soul of nature, in a fellow that is "pigeon livered and lacks gall," laid open and anatomized. You can see that his heart is no bigger than a pin, and his head as soft as a pippin. His whole aspect is chilled and frightened as if he had been dipped in a pond, and yet he looks as if he would like to be snug and comfortable, if he durst. He smiles as if he would be friends

with you upon any terms; and the tears come in his eyes because you will not let him. The tones of his voice are prophetic as the cuckoo's under-song. His words are made of water-gruel. The scene in which he tries to make a confidant of the Major is great; and his song of "Robinson Crusoe" as melancholy as the island itself. The reconciliation-scene with his wife, and his exclamation over her, "to think that I should make my Molly *veep*," are pathetic, if the last stage of human infirmity is so. This farce appears to us to be both moral and entertaining; yet it does not take. It is considered as an unjust satire on the city and the country at large, and there is a very frequent repetition of the word "nonsense," in the house during the performance. Mr. Dowton was even hissed, either from the upper boxes or gallery, in his speech recounting the marching of his corps "from Brentford to Ealing, and from Ealing to Acton;" and several persons in the pit, who thought the whole *low*, were for going out. This shews well for the progress of civilisation. We suppose the manners described in the Mayor of Garratt have in the last forty years become obsolete, and the characters ideal: we have no longer either hen-pecked or brutal husbands, or domineering wives; the Miss Molly Jollops no longer wed Jerry Sneaks, or admire the brave

Major Sturgeons on the other side of Temple Bar; all our soldiers have become heroes, and our magistrates respectable, and the farce of life is o'er!

THE MAN OF THE WORLD.

July 6, 1816.

We are glad to find the Haymarket Theatre re-opened with some good actors from the Winter Theatres, besides recruits. On Monday was played the Man of the World, Sir Pertinax Mac Sycophant by Mr. Terry. This part was lately performed by Mr. Bibby at Covent-Garden without success; and we apprehend that his failure was owing to the extreme purity and breadth of his Scotch accent. Mr. Terry avoided splitting on this rock, by sinking the Scotch brogue almost entirely, and thus this national caricature was softened into a more general and less offensive portrait of a common Man of the World. On the whole, Mr. Terry gave not only less of the costume and local colouring of the character, but less of the general force and spirit than the former gentleman. He however displayed his usual judgment and atten-

tion to his part, with less appearance of effort than he sometimes shews. If Mr. TERRY would take rather less pains, he would be a better actor. He is exceedingly correct in the conception of his characters, but in the execution he often takes twice the time in bringing out his words that he ought, and lays double the emphasis on them that is necessary. In the present case, Mr. TERRY, probably from feeling no great liking to his part, laid less stress on particular passages, and was more happy on that account. The scene in which he gives the account of his progress in life to his son Egerton, was one of the most effectual. Mrs. GLOVER's Lady Rodolpha Lumbercourt had considerable spirit and archness, as well as force. Of the new performers in it we cannot speak very favourably. The young gentleman who played Sydney, a Mr. BAKER, seems really a clergyman by profession, and to have left, rather imprudently, the prospect of a fellowship at Oxford or Cambridge. His voice and cadences are good; but they are fitter for the pulpit than the stage.

Mr. WATKINSON, on Thursday played Sir Robert Bramble, in the Poor Gentleman, with a considerable share of that blunt native humour, and rustic gentility, which distinguish so large

a class of characters on the English stage. We mean that sort of characters who usually appear in a brown bob-wig, and chocolate-coloured coat, with brass buttons. Of this class Mr. WATKINSON, as far as we could judge on a first acquaintance, appears to be a very respectable, if not brilliant representative. A Miss TAYLOR made an elegant and interesting Emily, the daughter of the Poor Gentleman; and Mr. FOOTE played that personification of modern humanity, the Poor Gentleman himself. There is a tone of recitation in this actor's delivery, perhaps not ill suited to the whining sentimentality of the parts he has to play, but which is very tiresome to the ear. We might say to him as CÆSAR did to some one, "Do you read or sing? If you sing, you sing very ill." We must not omit to mention the part of Miss Lætitia Macnab, which was performed to the life by a Mrs. KENNEDY of Covent-Garden Theatre, whom we never saw here before, but whom we shall certainly remember. Her hoop-petticoats, flying lappets, high head-dress, face, voice, and figure, reminded us but too well of that obsolete class of antiquated maidens of old families that flourished about fifty years ago, who had no idea of any thing but the self-importance which they derived from their ancestors, and of the personal attractions which were to be found in the ridiculousness of their dress. The effect was as

surprising as it was painful. It was as if Miss Macnab had come in person from the grave. It was like the restoration of the BOURBONS!

After this melancholy casualty, we had the Agreeable Surprise. Mrs. GIBBS played Cowslip delightfully. FAWCETT was exceedingly laughable in Lingo; and would have been more so, if he had played it with more gravity. FAWCETT's fault of late is, that he has not respect enough for his art. This is a pity; for his art is a very good art. At the scene between him and Mrs. Cheshire, (Mrs. DAVENPORT), the house was in a roar. We never knew before that Lingo and Cowslip were descendants of Touchstone and Audrey. This is one of O'KEEFFE's best farces, and his farces are the best in the world except MOLIERE's. O'KEEFFE is (for he is still living) our English MOLIERE, and we here return him our most hearty thanks for all the hearty laughing he has given us. *C'est un bon garçon.* There are in the Agreeable Surprise some of the most irresistible *double entendres* that can be conceived, and in Lingo's superb replication, "A scholar! I was a master of scholars!" he has hit the height of the ridiculous.

MISS MERRY'S MANDANE.

July 20, 1816.

A YOUNG lady whose name is Miss MERRY, has appeared with great applause in the part of Mandane, in Artaxerxes, at the New English Opera. Miss MERRY is not tall, but there is something not ungraceful in her person: her face, without being regular, has a pleasing expression in it; her action is good, and often spirited; and her voice is excellent. The songs she has to sing in this character are delightful, and she sung them very delightfully. Her timidity on the first night of her appearing was so great, as almost to prevent her from going on. But her apprehensions, though they lessened the power of her voice, did not take from its sweetness. She appears to possess very great taste and skill; and to have not only a fine voice, but (what many singers want) an ear for music. Her tones are mellow, true, and varied; some-

times exquisitely broken by light, fluttering half-notes—at other times reposing on a deep-murmuring bass. The general style of her singing is equable, and unaffected; yet in one or two passages, we thought she added some extraneous and unnecessary ornaments, and (for a precious note or two) lost the charm of the expression, by sacrificing simplicity to execution. This objection struck us most in the manner in which Miss Merry sung the beautiful air, "If o'er the cruel tyrant Love," which is an irresistible appeal to the sentiments, and seems, in its genuine simplicity, above all art. This song, and particularly the last lines, "What was my pride, is now my shame," &c. ought to be sung, as we have heard them sung, as if the notes fell from her lips like the liquid drops from the bending flower, and her voice fluttered and died away with the expiring conflict of passion in her bosom. If vocal music has an advantage over instrumental, it is, we imagine, in this very particular; in the immediate communication between the words and the expression they suggest, between the voice and the soul of the singer, which ought to mould every tone, whether deep or tender, according to the impulse of true passion. Miss Merry's execution does not rest entirely upon the ground of expression: she is not always thinking of the subject. Her "Soldier tired," and "Let not

rage thy bosom firing," were both admirable. Her voice has not the piercing softness of Miss STEPHENS's, its clear crystalline qualities. Neither has her style of singing the same originality, and simple pathos. Miss STEPHENS's voice and manner are her own: Miss MERRY belongs to a class of singers, but that class is a very pleasing one, and she is at present at the head of it. She is an undoubted acquisition both to the New English Opera, and to the English stage.

Mr. HORN's Arbaces was very fine. He sings always in tune, and in an admirable *sostenuto* style. He keeps his voice (perhaps indeed) too much under him, and does not let it loose often enough. His manner of singing "Water parted from the sea" was of this internal and suppressed character. Though this may be the feeling suggested by part of the words, yet certainly in other parts the voice ought to be thrown out, and as it were, go a journey, like the water's course. Of the other performers, we can say nothing favourable.

EXIT BY MISTAKE.

July 27, 1816.

We insert the following letter, which has been sent us, merely to show our impartiality:

Mr. Editor,—I have been to see the new Comedy, Exit by Mistake, at the Theatre Royal Haymarket. As this piece is *sans* moral and *sans* interest, I am surprised at its being called a *Comedy*, for many of our old *Farces* are more worthy of the name. Perhaps the author fondly anticipated much pathos from Mrs. Kendal's scene with her son (Mr. Barnard), but it would have been much better if both mother and son had been omitted, for the latter is a hot-headed blockhead, who commits a most unjustifiable assault upon a *stranger*, in a *stranger's* house, by turning him out, which gross affront is in the last Act overlooked. In consequence of a letter about Mr. Roland's departure, accompanied by his will, it is supposed he had departed from the *world* instead of the *country* where he was. This is the "*Exit by Mistake*," but the chief mistakes arise from the *entrances* of the performers. The executor hearing that Roland (Mr. Terry) is alive and in town, goes to an inn to meet him, but most unaccountably mistakes Mr. Rattletrap (Russel)

an actor just arrived from America, for his own friend, and even calls the actor by the name of Rattletrap. Poor Mr. Roland, in order to recover his property, inquires for an attorney, and is told there's one *below*. Soon after the executor enters, and though dressed in a *brown* coat, he is mistaken for an attorney. There are other inferior mistakes in the piece, but the greatest mistake is the author's—for it is a Farce instead of a Comedy. As the play-bills state, that this piece has since been applauded by "brilliant and crowded audiences," and that "no orders can be admitted;" the proprietors have no right to complain of their rival, the Lyceum Theatre, except Mr. ARNOLD should produce a good Opera to oppose this Farcical Comedy, and then the public will see the utility of rival theatres. Mr. TOKELY's character in it (Crockery) is the same which the same gentleman performs in the author's "Love and Gout," with this difference, that in one he is a dissatisfied gentleman, and in the other a whining servant. Mr. JONES's character (Restless Absent) keeps him in motion the first two Acts, but in the last he is quite stationary.

"DRAMATICUS.

"*July* 25, 1816."

We do not agree with DRAMATICUS on the subject of the piece, which he so resolutely condemns. He puts us a little (though not much) in mind of JOHN DENNIS, who drew his sword on the author of a successful tragedy, without any other provocation. As to the title of this play, to which our critic so vehemently objects, we leave him to settle that point with the author. We do not judge of plays, or of any thing else by their titles.

The writer says, the Proprietors of the Hay-

market have no right to complain, "except Mr. ARNOLD should produce a good Opera to oppose this Farcical Comedy, and then the public will see the utility of rival theatres." We wish Mr. ARNOLD would lose no time in convincing the public. As we have not the same faith as our correspondent in the power of rival theatres in screwing up the wits of their opponents, we did not go to the new comedy of Exit by Mistake, expecting either a profound moral or high interest; and so far we were not disappointed. But with a good deal of absurdity, there is some whim in it: there are several very tolerable puns in it, and a sufficient stock of lively passing allusions. It is light and laughable, and does well enough for a summer theatre. The part of Crockery in particular is very droll, and to us quite new, for we are not acquainted with "the dissatisfied gentleman," his predecessor, in Love and Gout. Crockery is a foolish fat servant (personated exceedingly well by Mr. TOKELY) who complains that every thing is altered since he went abroad with his master, "cries all the way from Portsmouth, because the mile-stones are changed, and is in despair because an old pigstye has been converted into a dwelling-house." This whimpering, maudlin philosopher, is as tenacious of innovation as the late Mr. BURKE, and as great an admirer of *the good old times*, as the editor of a modern

Journal. In one thing we agree with honest Crockery, where he does not like to see the sign of the Duke of MARLBOROUGH's head pulled down for the Duke of WELLINGTON's; in the first place, because the Duke of MARLBOROUGH had a very good head, and the Duke of WELLINGTON's is a mere sign-post; in the second, because we think it a more meritorious act to drive out the English BOURBONS, the STUARTS, than to restore the French STUARTS, the BOURBONS, to the throne of *their* ancestors. So much for the politics of the Theatre.

There is another new piece, A Man in Mourning for Himself, come out at the New English Theatre, which, whether it is Comedy, Opera, or Farce, we do not know. But—*de mortuis nil nisi bonum.* So let it pass. But there is a Mr. HERRING in it, whom we cannot pass by without notice. He is the oddest fish that has lately been landed on the stage. We are to thank Mr. ARNOLD for bringing him ashore. This *did* require some sagacity, some discrimination. We never saw any thing more amphibious,—with coat-pockets in the shape of fins, and a jowl like gills with the hook just taken out. He flounders and flounces upon the stage with the airs and genius of a Dutch plaise. His person detonates with boisterous wit and hu-

mour, and his voice goes off like a cracker near a sounding-board. With these preparatory qualifications, he played a valet who is his own master; and the jumble of high life below stairs was very complete. This gentleman's gentleman was very coarse and very mawkish; very blustering and very sheepish; and runs his head into scrapes without the slightest suspicion. We have never seen Mr. HERRING before; but on this occasion he was, according to our tastes, in fine pickle and preservation.

The Beggar's Opera was performed on Thursday, when Miss MERRY appeared in the part of Polly, and Mr. HORN as Captain Macheath. Miss MERRY displayed great sweetness and taste in most of the songs, and her acting was pleasing, though she laboured under considerable embarrassment. We liked her "Ponder well," and "My all's in my possession," the best. She seemed to us not to be quite perfect either in "Cease your funning," or in the exquisite little air of "He so teased me." We have no doubt, however, that she will make in time a very interesting representative of one of the most interesting characters on the stage, for we hardly know any character more artless and amiable than GAY's Polly, except perhaps SHAKESPEAR's Imogen. And Polly has the ad-

vantage on the stage, for she *may be sung*, but Imogen cannot be *acted*.

Mr. HORN's Macheath was much better than what we have lately seen. He sung the songs well, with a little too much ornament for the profession of the Captain: and his air and manner, though they did not fall into the common error of vulgarity, were rather too precise and finical. Macheath should be a fine man and a gentleman, but he should be one of God Almighty's gentlemen, not a gentleman of the black rod. His gallantry and good-breeding should arise from impulse, not from rule; not from the trammels of education, but from a soul generous, courageous, good-natured, aspiring, amorous. The class of the character is very difficult to hit. It is something between gusto and slang, like port-wine and brandy mixed. It is not the mere gentleman that should be represented, but the blackguard sublimated into the gentleman. This character is qualified in a highwayman, as it is qualified in a prince. We hope this is not a libel. Miss KELLY's Lucy was excellent. She is worthy to act GAY.

THE ITALIAN OPERA.

King's Theatre, Aug. 3, 1816.

In Schlegel's work on the Drama, there are the following remarks on the nature of the Opera:

"In Tragedy the chief object is the poetry, and every other thing is subordinate to it; but in the Opera, the poetry is merely an accessary, the means of connecting the different parts together, and it is almost buried under its associates. The best prescription for the composition of the text of an Opera is to give a poetical sketch, which may be afterwards filled up and coloured by the other arts. This anarchy of the arts, where music, dancing, and decoration endeavour to surpass each other by the most profuse display of dazzling charms, constitutes the very essence of the Opera. What sort of opera music would it be, where the words should receive a mere rythmical accompaniment of the simplest

modulations? The fantastic magic of the Opera consists altogether in the luxurious competition of the different means, and in the perplexity of an overflowing superfluity. This would at once be destroyed by an approximation to the severity of the ancient taste in any one point, even in that of costume; for the contrast would render the variety in all the other departments quite insupportable. The costume of the Opera ought to be dazzling, and overladen with ornaments; and hence many things which have been censured as unnatural, such as exhibiting heroes warbling and trilling in the excess of despondency, are perfectly justifiable. This fairy world is not peopled by real men, but by a singular kind of singing creatures. Neither is it any disadvantage to us, that the Opera is conveyed in a language which is not generally understood; the text is altogether lost in the music, and the language, the most harmonious and musical, and which contains the greatest number of open vowels and distinct accents for recitative, is therefore the best."

The foregoing remarks give the best account we have seen of that splendid exhibition, the Italian Opera. These German critics can explain every thing, and upon any given occasion, *make the worse appear the better reason.* Their theories are always at variance with common sense, and we shall not in the present instance,

undertake to decide between them. There is one thing, however, which we will venture to decide, which is, that the feelings of the English people must undergo some very elaborate process (metaphysical or practical) before they are thoroughly reconciled to this union of different elements, the consistency and harmony of which depends on their contradiction and discord. We take it, the English are so far from being an opera-going, that they are not even a play-going people, from constitution. You can hardly get them to speak their sentiments, much less to sing them, or to hear them sung with any real sympathy. The boxes, splendid as they are, and splendid as the appearance of those in them is, do not breathe a spirit of enjoyment. They are rather like the sick wards of luxury and idleness, where people of a certain class are condemned to perform the quarantine of fashion for the evening. The rest of the spectators are sulky and self-important, and the only idea which each person has in his head, seems to be that he is at the opera. Little interest is shewn in the singing or dancing, little pleasure appears to be derived from either, and the audience seem only to be stunned and stupified with wonder. The satisfaction which the English feel in this entertainment is very much *against the grain*. They are a people, jealous of being pleased in any way but their own.

We were particularly struck with the force of these remarks the other evening in the gallery, where our fellow-countrymen seemed to be only upon their good behaviour or self-defence against the ill-behaviour of others, some persons asserting their right of talking loud about their own affairs, and others resenting this, not as an interruption of their pleasures, but as an encroachment on their privileges. Soon after a Frenchman came in, and his eye at once fastened upon the ballet. At a particular air, he could no longer contain himself, but joined in chorus in an agreeable under-voice, as if he expected others to keep time to him, and exclaiming, while he wiped his forehead from an exuberance of satisfaction, his eyes glistening, and his face shining, "*Ah c'est charmant, c'est charmant!*" Now this, being ourselves English, we confess, gave us more pleasure than the opera or the ballet, in both of which, however, we felt a considerable degree of melancholy satisfaction, *selon la coutume de notre pays*—according to the custom of our country.

The opera was Cosi fan Tutti, with MOZART'S music, and the ballet was the Dansomanie. The music of the first of these is really enough (to borrow a phrase from a person who was also a great man in his way) "to draw three souls out of one weaver:" and as to the ballet, it might make a Frenchman forget his country

and all other things. This ballet is certainly the essence of a ballet. What a grace and a liveliness there is in it! What spirit and invention! What can exceed the ingenuity of the dance in which the favoured lover joins in with his mistress and the rival, and makes all sorts of advances to her, and receives her favours, her pressures of the hand, and even kisses, without being found out by the other, who thinks all these demonstrations of fondness intended for him! What an enthusiasm for art in the character of the master of the house, who is seized by the Dansomanie! What a noble and disinterested zeal in the pursuit and encouragement of his favourite science! What a mechanical sprightliness in all about him, particularly in the servant who throws down a whole equipage of china, while he is dancing with it on his head, and is rewarded by his master for this proof of devotion to his interests! What a sympathy throughout between the heels and the head, between the heart and the fingers' ends! The Minuet de la Cour, danced in full dresses, and with the well-known accompaniment of the music, put us in mind of the old chivalrous times of the Duke de Nemours and the Princess of Cleves, or of what really seems to us longer ago, the time when we ourselves used to be called out at school before the assembled taste and fashion of the neighbourhood, to go through

this very dance with the partner whom we had selected for this purpose, and presented with a bunch of flowers on the occasion!

The Opera had less justice done it than the Ballet. The laughing Trio was spoiled by Mr. NALDI, who performs the part of an "Old Philosopher" in it, but who is more like an impudent valet or *major-domo* of an hotel. We never saw any one so much at home; who seems so little conscious of the existence of any one but himself, and who throws his voice, his arms and legs about with such a total disregard of *bienseance*. The character is a kind of Opera Pandarus, who exposes the inconstancy of two young ladies, by entangling them in an intrigue with their own lovers in disguise. Mr. BRAHAM, we are told, sings MOZART with a peculiar greatness of gusto. But this greatness of gusto does not appear to us the real excellence of MOZART. The song beginning *Secondate*, in which he and his friend (Signor BEGRI) call upon the gentle zephyrs by moonlight to favour their design, is exquisite, and "floats upon the air, smoothing the raven down of darkness till it smiles."

> "And Silence wish'd, she might be never more
> "Still to be so displaced."

Madame FODOR's voice does not harmonize with the music of this composer. It is hard,

metallic, and jars like the reverberation of a tight string. Mozart's music should seem to come from the air, and return to it. Madame Vestris is a pretty little figure, and is in this respect a contrast to Madame Fodor.

OLD CUSTOMS.

August 10, 1816.

We have suffered two disappointments this week, one in seeing a farce that was announced and acted at the English Opera, and the other in not seeing one that was announced and not acted at the Haymarket. We should hope that which is to come is the best; for the other is very bad, as we think. Old Customs is a farce or operetta, in which an uncle (Mr. Bartley) and his nephew (Mr. Wrench) court the same young lady (Miss L. Kelly). She prefers the nephew, from whom she has received several letters. These, with her answers, she sends to Mr. Bartley in a packet or basket, to convince him of her real sentiments, and of the impropriety of his prosecuting his rivalry to his nephew. In the mean time, it being Christmas or New Year's Day (we forget which), Bartley's servant (Russell) receives a visit from his old

mother, who, in this season of compliments and presents, brings him a little sister in a basket, and leaves it to his care, while she goes to see her acquaintance in the village. RUSSELL, after singing a ludicrous lullaby to the baby, goes out himself and leaves it in the basket on the table, a great and improbable neglect, no doubt, of his infant charge. His master (BARTLEY) soon after comes in, and receives the letter from his mistress (Miss L. KELLY), informing him of a present she has sent him *in a basket*, meaning her packet of love-letters, and apologizing for the abrupt method she has taken of unfolding the true state of her heart and progress of her affections. BARTLEY looks about for this important confidential basket, and finds that which the old woman had left with her son, with its explanatory contents. At this indecency of the young lady, and indignity offered to himself, he grows very much incensed, struts and frets about the stage, and when Miss L. KELLY herself, with her father and lover, comes to ask his decision upon the question after the clear evidence which she has sent him, nothing can come up to the violence of his rage and impatience, but the absurdity of the contrivance by which it is occasioned. His nephew (Mr. WRENCH) provokes him still farther, by talking of a present which he has left with him that morning, an embryo production of his efforts to please, meaning a ma-

nuscript comedy, but which Mr. BARTLEY confounds with the living Christmas-box in the basket. A strange scene of confusion ensues, in which every one is placed in as absurd and ridiculous a situation as possible, till RUSSELL enters and brings about an unforeseen *denouement*, by giving an account of the adventures of himself and his little brother.

Such is the plot, and the wit is answerable to it. There was a good deal of laughing, and it is better to laugh at nonsense than at *nothing*. But really the humours of punch and the puppet-shew are sterling, legitimate, classical comedy, compared with the stuff of which the Muse of the new English Opera is weekly delivered. But it is in vain to admonish. The piece, we understand, has since been withdrawn.

MY LANDLADY'S NIGHT-GOWN.

Aug. 17, 1816.

THE new Farce at the Haymarket-Theatre, called My Landlady's Night-Gown, is made of very indifferent stuff. It is very tedious and nonsensical. Mr. JONES is the hero of the piece, and gives the title to it; for being closely pressed by some bailiffs, he suddenly slips on his Landlady's Night-gown, and escapes in disguise from his pursuers, by speaking in a feigned female voice to one of them, and knocking the other down by an exertion of his proper and natural prowess. Such is the story which he himself tells, to account for the oddity of his first appearance. Yet the apology is not necessary. Mr. JONES himself is always a greater oddity than his dress. There is something in his face and manner that bids equal defiance to disguise or ornament. The mind is affirmed by a great poet to be "its own place:" and Nature, in making Mr. JONES, said to the tailor, You have no buisness here.

Whether he plays my Lord Foppington in point-lace, or personates an old woman in My Landlady's Night-Gown, he is just the same lively, bustling, fidgetty, staring, queer-looking mortal; and the gradations of his metamorphosis from the nobleman to the footman are quite imperceptible. Yet he is an actor not without merit; the town like him, and he knows it; and as to ourselves, we have fewer objections to him the more we see of him. Use reconciles one to any thing. The only part of this entertainment which is at all entertaining, is the scene in which RUSSELL, as the tailor, measures JONES for a new suit of clothes. This scene is not dull, but it is very gross, and the grossness is not carried off by a proportionable degree of wit. We could point it the instances, but not with decency. So we will let it alone. TOKELY's character is very well, but not so good as Crockery. He is an actor of some humour, and he sometimes shews a happy conception of character; but we hope he will never play Sir Benjamin Backbite again.

New English Opera.

Miss MERRY has disappointed us again, in not appearing in Rosetta. We may perhaps take our revenge, by not saying a word about her when she does come out. It was certainly a

disappointment, though Miss KELLY played the part in her stead, who is a fine sensible girl, and sings not amiss. But there is that opening scene where Rosetta and Lucinda sit and sing with their song-books in their hands among the garden bowers and roses, for which we had screwed up our ears to a most critical anticipation of delight, not to be soothed but with the sweetest sounds. To enter into good acting, requires an effort; but to hear soft music is a pleasure without any trouble. Besides, we had seen Miss STEPHENS in Rosetta, and wanted to compare notes. How then, Miss MERRY, could you disappoint us?

Mr. HORN executed the part of Young Meadows with his usual ability and propriety, both as an actor and a singer. We also think that Mr. CHATTERLEY's Justice Woodcock was a very excellent piece of acting. The smile of recognition with which he turns round to his old flame Rosetta, in the last scene, told completely. Mrs. GROVE's Deborah Woodcock reminded us of Mrs. SPARKS's manner of acting it, which we take to be a high compliment.

Mr. INCLEDON appeared for the first time on this stage, as Hawthorn, and sung the usual songs with his well-known power and sweetness of voice. He is a true old English singer, and there is nobody who goes through a drinking song, a hunting song, or a sailor's song like him.

He makes a very loud and agreeable noise without any meaning. At present he both speaks and sings as if he had a lozenge or a slice of marmalade in his mouth. If he could go to America and leave his voice behind him, it would be a great benefit—to the parent country.

CASTLE OF ANDALUSIA.

New English Opera, Aug. 31, 1816.

We hear nothing of Miss Merry; and there is nothing else at this theatre that we wish to hear. Even Mr. Horn is nothing without her; he stands alone and unsupported; and the ear loses its relish and its power of judging of harmonious sounds, where it has nothing but harshness and discordance to compare them with. We are sorry to include in this censure Miss Kelly, whose attempts to supply the place of *Prima Donna* of the English Opera, do great credit to her talents, industry, and good-nature, but still they have not given her a voice, which is indispensable to a singer, as singing is to an Opera. If the Managers think it merely necessary to get some one to *go through* the different songs in Artaxerxes, the Beggars' Opera, or Love in a Village, they might hire persons to read them through at a cheaper rate; and in

either case, we fear they must equally have to hire the audience as well as the actors. Mr. INCLEDON sung the duet of "All's well," the other night, with Mr. HORN, in the Castle of Andalusia, and has repeated it every evening since. Both singers were very much and deservedly applauded in it. Mr. INCLEDON's voice is certainly a fine one, but its very excellence makes us regret that its modulation is not equal to its depth and compass. His best notes come from him involuntarily, or are often misplaced. The effect of his singing is something like standing near a music-seller's shop, where some idle person is trying the different instruments; the flute, the trumpet, the bass-viol, give forth their sounds of varied strength and sweetness, but without order or connection.'

One of the novelties of the Castle of Andalusia, as got up at this theatre, was Mr. HERRING's Pedrillo; an odd fish certainly, a very outlandish person, and whose acting is altogether incoherent and gross, but with a certain strong relish in it. It is only *too much* of a *good thing*. His oil has not salt enough to qualify it. He has a great power of exhibiting the ludicrous and absurd; but by its being either not like, or over-done, the ridicule falls upon himself instead of the character. Indeed he is literally to the comedian, what the caricaturist is to the painter; and his representation of fool

men and fine gentlemen, is just such as we see in GILLRAY's shop window. The same thing perhaps is not to be borne on the stage, though we laugh at it till we are obliged to hold our sides, in a caricature. We do not see, however, why this style of acting might not make a distinct species of itself, like the Italian *opera buffa*, with Scaramouch, Harlequin, and Pantaloon, among whom Mr. HERRING would shine like a gold fish in a glass-case.

TWO WORDS.

Sept. 7, 1816.

It was the opinion of Colley Cibber, a tolerable judge of such matters, that in those degenerate days, the metropolis could only support one legitimate theatre, having a legitimate company, and acting legitimate plays. In the present improved state of the drama, which has 'gone like a crab backwards," we are nearly of the same opinion, in summer time at least. We critics have been for the last two months like mice in an air-pump, gasping for breath, subsisting on a sort of theatrical half-allowance. We hate coalitions in politics, but we really wish the two little Theatres would club their stock of wit and humour into one. We should then have a very tight, compact little company, and crowded houses in the dog-days.

The new after-piece of "Two Words," at the English Opera, is a delightful little piece. It is a scene with robbers and midnight murder in it;

and all such scenes are delightful to the reader or spectator. We can conceive nothing better managed than the plot of this. The spell-bound silence and dumb-show of Rose, the servant girl at the house in the forest, to which the benighted travellers come, has an inimitable effect; and to make it complete, it is played by Miss KELLY. The signals conveyed by the music of a lone flute in such a place, and at such a time, thrill through the ear, and almost suspend the breath. Mr. SHORT did not spoil the interest excited by the story, and both Mr. WILKINSON and Mrs. GROVE did justice to the parts of the terrified servant, and the mischievous old house-keeper, who is a dextrous accomplice in the dreadful scene. The fault of the piece is, that the interest necessarily falls off in the second act, which makes it rather tiresome, though the second appearance of Miss KELLY in it, as the ward of BARTLEY at his great castle, is very ingeniously contrived, and occasions some droll perplexities to her lover, Don ———, whose life she has just saved from the hands of the assassins, only escaping from their vengeance herself by the arrival of her valorous guardian and a party of his soldiers. On the whole, this is the best novelty that has been brought out during the season at the English Opera, and we wish it every possible success.

Mr. TERRY last week had for his benefit the Surrender of Calais. He played the part of Eustace de St. Pierre in it with judgment and energy, but without a pleasing effect. When Mr. TERRY plays these tragic characters,

"The line too labours, and the thoughts move slow."

He sticks in tragedy like a man in the mud; or to borrow a higher figure from a learned critic, "he resembles a person walking on stilts in a morass." We shall always be glad to lift him out of it into the common path of unpretending comedy: there he succeeds, and is himself. The Surrender of Calais is as interesting as a tragedy can be without poetry in it. It has considerable pathos, though of a kind which borders on the shocking too much. It requires accomplished actors to carry it off; but it was not, in the present instance, very heroically cast. The Haymarket Theatre inclines more to comedy than to tragedy; and there are several scenes in this tragedy (for such it really is *till it is over*), which, "not to be hated," should be seen at the greatest possible distance that the stage allows. One advantage, at least, of our overgrown theatres is, that they throw the most distressing objects into a milder historical perspective.

THE WONDER.

Covent-Garden, Sept. 16, 1816.

The Wonder is one of our good old English Comedies, which holds a happy medium between grossness and refinement. The plot is rich in intrigue, and the dialogue in *double entendre*, which however is so light and careless, as only to occasion a succession of agreeable alarms to the ears of delicacy. This genuine comedy, which is quite as pleasant to read as to see (for we have made the experiment within these few days, to our entire satisfaction) was written by an Englishwoman, before the sentimental, Ultra-Jacobinical German School, of which a short and amusing account has been lately given in the Courier, had spoiled us with their mawkish platonics and maudlin metaphysics. The soul is here with extreme simplicity considered as a mere accessary to the senses in love, and the conversation of bodies preferred to that of minds

as much more entertaining. We do not subscribe our names to this opinion, but it is Mrs. CENTLIVRE's, and we do not chuse to contradict a lady. The plot is admirably calculated for stage-effect, and kept up with prodigious ingenuity and vivacity to the end. The spectator is just beginning to be tired with the variety of stratagems that follow and perplex one another, when the whole difficulty is happily unravelled in the last scene. The *dove-tailing* of the incidents and situations (so that one unexpected surprise gives place to another, and the success of the plot is prevented by the unluckiest accident in the world happening in the very nick of time) supplies the place of any great force of character or sentiment. The time for the entrance of each person on the stage is the moment when they are least wanted, and when their arrival makes either themselves or somebody else look as foolish as possible. The Busy Body shews the same talent for invention and *coup-d'œil* for theatrical effect, and the laughableness of both comedies depends on a brilliant series of mis-timed exits and entrances. The Wonder is not, however, without a moral; it exhibits a rare example of a woman keeping a secret, for the sake of a female friend, which she is under every temptation to break, and her resolution and fidelity are, after a number of mortifying accidents and fears, happily rewarded by the

triumph both of her friendship and her love. The situation of Violante is more prominent than her character; or, at least, the character is more moral than entertaining. She is a young lady of great goodness of heart and firmness of principle, but who neither displays any great superiority of wit in extricating herself from the difficulties in which her regard for the safety of her friend involves her, nor of spirit in repelling the insinuations to which her reputation is exposed in the eyes of her lover. She submits to her situation with firmness of purpose and conscious reliance on her own innocence.

Miss Boyle, the young lady who appeared in this character on Friday, shewed herself not incompetent to its successful delineation. Her figure is tall, and her face, though her features are small, is pretty and expressive. Her articulation (for a first appearance) was remarkably distinct, and her voice is full and sweet. It is however rather sentimental than comic. She rounds her words too much, nor do they come "trippingly from the tongue." It is sufficient if the dialogue of genteel comedy comes with light-fluttering grace and gay animation from the lips; it should not come labouring up all the way from the heart. This young lady's general demeanour is easy and unaffected; and when she has overcome her timidity, we have no doubt she will give considerable spirit and dignity to

the more serious scenes of the story. Her smile has much archness and expression; and we hope, from the promise of taste and talent which she gave through her whole performance, that she will prove an acquisition to the stage, in a line of comedy in which we are at present absolutely deficient. She was very favourably received throughout.

We do not think the play in general was well got up. CHARLES KEMBLE seemed to be rehearsing Don Felix with an eye to Macduff, or some face-making tragic character. He was only excellent in the drunken scene. Mrs. GIBBS at one time fairly took wing across the stage, and played the chamber-maid with too little restraint from vulgar decorums. Mr. ABBOTT never acts ill, but he does not answer to our idea of Colonel Briton. EMERY's Gibby was sturdy enough, and seemed to prove what he himself says, that "a Scotchman is not ashamed to shew his face any where."

THE DISTRESSED MOTHER.

Sept. 21, 1816.

A Mr. Macready appeared at Covent-Garden Theatre on Monday and Friday, in the character of Orestes, in the Distressed Mother, a bad play for the display of his powers, in which, however, he succeeded in making a decidedly favourable impression upon the audience. His voice is powerful in the highest degree, and at the same time possesses great harmony and modulation. His face is not equally calculated for the stage. He declaims better than any body we have lately heard. He is accused of being violent, and of wanting pathos. Neither of these objections is true. His manner of delivering the first speeches in this play was admirable, and the want of increasing interest afterwards was the fault of the author, rather than the actor. The fine suppressed tone in which he assented to Pyrrhus's command to convey the

message to Hermione was a test of his variety of power, and brought down repeated acclamations from the house. We do not lay much stress on his mad-scene, though that was very good in its kind, for mad-scenes do not occur very often, and when they do, had in general better be omitted. We have not the slightest hesitation in saying, that Mr. MACREADY is by far the best tragic actor that has come out in our remembrance, with the exception of Mr. KEAN. We however heartily wish him well out of this character of Orestes. It is a kind of forlorn hope in tragedy. There is nothing to be made of it on the English stage, beyond experiment. It is a trial, not a triumph. These French plays puzzle an English audience exceedingly. They cannot attend to the actor, for the difficulty they have in understanding the author. We think it wrong in any actor of great merit (which we hold Mr. MACREADY to be) to come out in an ambiguous character, to salve his reputation. An actor is like a man who throws himself from the top of a steeple by a rope. He should chuse the highest steeple he can find, that if he does not succeed in coming safe to the ground, he may break his neck at once, and so put himself and the spectators out of farther pain.

AMBROSE PHILLIPS's Distressed Mother is a very good translation from RACINE's Andro-

mache. It is an alternation of topics, of *pros* and *cons*, on the casuistry of domestic and state affairs, and produced a great effect of *ennui* on the audience. When you hear one of the speeches in these rhetorical tragedies, you know as well what will be the answer to it, as when you see the tide coming up the river—you know that it will return again. The other actors filled their parts with successful mediocrity.

We highly disapprove of the dresses worn on this occasion, and supposed to be the exact Greek costume. We do not know that the Greek heroes were dressed like women, or wore their long hair strait down their backs. Or even supposing that they did, this is not generally known or understood by the audience; and though the preservation of the ancient costume is a good thing, it is of more importance not to shock our present prejudices. The managers of Covent-Garden are not the Society of Antiquaries. The attention to costume is only necessary to preserve probability: in the present instance, it could only violate it, because there is nothing to lead the public opinion to expect such an exhibition. We know how the Turks are dressed, from seeing them in the streets; we know the costume of the Greek statues, from seeing casts in the shop-windows: we know that savages go naked, from reading voyages and travels: but we do not know that the

Grecian Chiefs at the Siege of Troy were dressed as Mr. CHARLES KEMBLE, Mr. ABBOTT, and Mr. MACREADY were the other evening in the Distressed Mother. It is a discovery of the Managers; and they should have kept their secret to themselves.—The epithet in Homer, applied to the Grecian warriors, Καρη κωμοοντες, is not any proof. It signifies not *long-haired*, but literally *bushy-headed*, which would come nearer to the common Brutus head, than this long dangling slip of hair. The oldest and most authentic models we have are the Elgin Marbles, and it is certain the Theseus is a *crop*. One would think this standard might satisfy the Committee of Managers in point of classical antiquity. But no such thing. They are much deeper in Greek costume and the history of the fabulous ages than those old-fashioned fellows, the Sculptors who lived in the time of Pericles. But we have said quite enough on this point.

Drury-Lane.

THE chief novelties at this Theatre for the present week, have been a Mr. BENGOUGH, from the Theatre Royal, Bath, and a Mrs. KNIGHT, of the York Theatre, who have appeared in the characters of Baron Wildenheim and Agatha Friburg, in Lovers' Vows. Both have been successful. Mr. BENGOUGH is an actor who

shews considerable judgment and feeling, and who would produce more effect than he does, if he took less pains to produce it. The appearance of study takes from that of nature, and yet the expression of natural pathos is what he seems to excel in. He treads the stage well, and is, we think, an acquisition to the company.

We wonder the long-winded, heavy-handed writer in the Courier, who has been belabouring Bertram so woefully, does not fall foul of Lovers' Vows, as the quintessence of metaphysical licentiousness and the ultra-Jacobinism of ultra-Jacobinical poetry. We think that everlasting writer might build thirty columns of lumbering criticisms, "pointing to the skies," on any single passage of this effusion of German sentiment and genius. We hope the worthy author will take this hint, and after he has exhausted upon this work the inexhaustible stores of his unspeakable discoveries and researches into the theory of mill-stones, we would recommend him to turn his pen to an almost forgotten play, called Remorse, at the bottom of which, if he will look narrowly, he will find "a vaporous drop profound" of the same pernicious leaven; and by setting it fermenting, with the help of transcendental reasoning, and the mechanical operations of the spirit, may raise mists and clouds that will ascend above

the moon, and turn the Courier office into a laundry!—Oh, we had forgot: Mrs. MARDYN played her old character of Amelia Wildenheim more charmingly than ever. She acts even with more grace and spirit than when she first came out in it, and looks as handsome as she used to do.

MISS BOYLE'S ROSALIND.

Oct. 5, 1816.

We have had a considerable treat this week, in Miss Boyle's Rosalind, at Covent-Garden Theatre. It is one of the chastest and most pleasing pieces of comic acting we have seen for some time. We did not think much of her in Violante, which might be owing to the diffidence of a first appearance, or to the little she has to do in the character. But she rises with her characters, and really makes a very charming Rosalind. The words of Shakespear become her mouth, and come from it with a delicious freshness, which gives us back the sense. There should be in the tones of the voice, to repeat Shakespear's verses properly, something resembling the sound of musical glasses. He has himself given us his idea on this subject, where he says, "How silver sweet

sound lovers' tongues by night." We were not satisfied with Miss Boyle's enunciation in Violante. It wanted lightness and grace. Her Rosalind was spoken with more effect, and with more gaiety at the same time. The sentiment seemed to infuse into her the true comic spirit, and her acting improved with the wit and vivacity of the passages she had to deliver. This would be a defect in a character of mere manners, like Lady Townley, where there is always supposed to be an air or affectation of a certain agreeable vivacity or fashionable tone; but in a character of nature, like Rosalind, who is supposed to speak only what she thinks, and to express delight only as she feels it, it was a great beauty. Her eyes also became more sparkling, and her smile more significant, according to the *naiveté* and force of what she had to utter. The highest compliment we can pay her acting is by applying to it what Shakespear has somewhere said of poetry—

" Our poesy is a gum that issues
" From whence 'tis nourish'd. The fire i'th' flint
" Shews not till it be struck. Our gentle flame
" Provokes itself, and like the current flies
" Each bound in chafes."

To realize this description would be the perfection of comic acting. We must not forget her Cuckoo-song; indeed we could not, if we would.

It was quite delightful. The tone and manner in which she repeated the word Cuckoo, was as arch and provoking as possible, and seemed to grow more saucy every time by the repetition, but still, though it hovered very near them, it was restrained from passing the limits of delicacy and propriety. She was deservedly *encored* in it; though this circumstance seemed to throw her into some little confusion. We have, however, two faults to find, both of which may be easily remedied. The first is, that there is a tendency to a lisp in some of her words: the second is, that there is a trip in her gait, and too great a disposition to keep in motion while she is speaking, or to go up to the persons she is addressing, as if they were deaf. Both these are defects of inexperience: the two necessary qualities for any young actress to set out with, in the higher comedy, are liveliness and elegance, or in other words, feeling with delicacy, and these we think Miss BOYLE possesses. We were a good deal pleased with Mr. YOUNG's Jaques. He spoke several passages well, and is upon the whole an *improving* actor.

MR. MACREADY'S Bentevole, in the Italian Lover, is very highly spoken of. We only saw the last act of it, but it appeared to us to be very

fine in its kind. It was natural, easy, and forcible. Indeed, we suspect some parts of it were too natural, that is, that Mr. MACREADY thought too much of what his feelings might dictate in such circumstances, rather than of what the circumstances must have dictated to him to do. We allude particularly to the half significant, half hysterical laugh, and distorted jocular leer, with his eyes towards the persons accusing him of the murder, when the evidence of his guilt comes out. Either the author did not intend him to behave in this manner, or he must have made the other parties on the stage interrupt him as a self-convicted criminal. His appeal to Manoah (the witness against him) to suppress the proofs which must be fatal to his honour and his life, was truly affecting. His resumption of a spirit of defiance was not sufficiently dignified, and was more like the self-sufficient swaggering airs of comedy, than the real grandeur of tragedy, which should always proceed from passion. Mr. MACREADY sometimes, to express uneasiness and agitation, composes his cravat, as he would in a drawing-room. This is, we think, neither graceful nor natural in extraordinary situations. His tones are equally powerful and flexible, varying with the greatest facility from the lowest to the highest pitch of the human voice.

MR. MACREADY'S OTHELLO.

Oct. 12, 1816.

We have to speak this week of Mr. Macready's Othello, at Covent-Garden Theatre, and though it must be in favourable terms, it cannot be in very favourable ones. We have been rather spoiled for seeing any one else in this character, by Mr. Kean's performance of it, and also by having read the play itself lately. Mr. Macready was more than respectable in the part; and he only failed because he attempted to excel. He did not, however, express the individual bursts of feeling, nor the deep and accumulating tide of passion which ought to be given in Othello. It may perhaps seem an extravagant illustration, but the idea which we think any actor ought to have of this character, to play it to the height of the poetical conception, is that of a majestic serpent wounded, writhing under its pain, stung

to madness, and attempting by sudden darts, or coiling up its whole force, to wreak its vengeance on those about it, and falling at last a mighty victim under the redoubled strokes of its assailants. No one can admire more than we do the force of genius and passion which Mr. KEAN shews in this part, but he is not stately enough for it. He plays it like a gipsey, and not like a Moor. We miss in Mr. KEAN not the physiognomy, or the costume, so much as the *architectural* building up of the part. This character always puts us in mind of the line—

" Let Afric on its hundred thrones rejoice."

It not only appears to hold commerce with meridian suns, and that its blood is made drunk with the heat of scorching skies; but it indistinctly presents to us all the symbols of eastern magnificence. It wears a crown and turban, and stands before us like a tower. All this, it may be answered, is only saying that Mr. KEAN is not so tall as a tower: but any one, to play Othello properly, ought to look taller and grander than any tower. We shall see how Mr. YOUNG will play it. But this is from our present purpose. Mr. MACREADY is tall enough for the part, and the looseness of his figure was rather in character with the flexibility of the South: but there were no sweeping outlines, no massy movements in his action.

The movements of passion in Othello (and the motions of the body should answer to those of the mind) resemble the heaving of the sea in a storm; there are no sharp, slight, angular transitions, or if there are any, they are subject to this general swell and commotion. Mr. KEAN is sometimes too wedgy and determined; but Mr. MACREADY goes off like a shot, and startles our sense of hearing. One of these sudden explosions was when he is in such haste to answer the demands of the Senate on his services: "I do agnise a natural hardness," &c. as if he was impatient to exculpate himself from some charge, or wanted to take them at their word lest they should retract. There is nothing of this in Othello. He is calm and collected; and the reason why he is carried along with such vehemence by his passions when they are roused, is, that he is moved by their collected force. Another fault in Mr. MACREADY'S conception was, that he whined and whimpered once or twice, and tried to affect the audience by affecting a pitiful sensibility, not consistent with the dignity and masculine imagination of the character: as where he repeated, "No, not much moved," and again. "Othello's occupation's gone," in a childish treble. The only part which should approach to this effeminate tenderness of complaint is his reflection, "Yet, oh the pity of it, Iago, the pity of it!" What we liked best

was his ejaculation, "Swell, bosom, with thy fraught, *for 'tis of aspick's tongues.*" This was forcibly given, and as if his expression were choaked with the bitterness of passion. We do not know how he would have spoken the speech, "Like to the Pontic sea that knows no ebb," &c. which occurs just before, for it was left out. There was also something fine in his uneasiness and inward starting at the name of Cassio, but it was too often repeated, with a view to effect. Mr. MACREADY got most applause in such speeches as that addressed to Iago, "Horror on horror's head accumulate!" This should be a lesson to him. He very injudiciously, we think, threw himself on a chair at the back of the stage, to deliver the farewell apostrophe to Content, and to the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war." This might be a relief to him, but it distressed the audience.—On the whole, we think Mr. MACREADY'S powers are more adapted to the declamation than to the acting of passion: that is, that he is a better orator than actor. As to Mr. YOUNG'S Iago, "we never saw a gentleman acted finer." Mrs. FAUCIT'S Desdemona was very pretty. Mr. C. KEMBLE'S Cassio was excellent.

Drury-Lane.

THE town has been entertained this week by seeing Mr. STEPHEN KEMBLE in the part of Sir John Falstaff, as they were formerly with seeing Mr. LAMBERT in his own person. We see no more reason why Mr. STEPHEN KEMBLE should play Falstaff, than why LOUIS XVIII. is qualified to fill a throne, because he is fat, and belongs to a particular family. Every fat man cannot represent a great man. The knight was fat; so is the player: the Emperor was fat, so is the King who stands in his shoes. But there the comparison ends. There is no sympathy in mind—in wit, parts, or discretion. Sir John (and so we may say of the gentleman at St. Helena) "had guts in his brains." The mind was the man. His body did not weigh down his wit. His spirits shone through him. He was not a mere paunch, a bag-pudding, a lump of lethargy, a huge falling sickness, an imminent apoplexy, with water in the head.

The Managers of Drury-Lane, in providing a Sir John Falstaff to satisfy the taste of the town, seem to ask only with Mr. BURKE's political carcass-butchers, "How he cuts up in the cawl: how he tallows in the kidneys!" We are afraid the junto of Managers of Drury-Lane are not much wiser than the junto of Managers of the affairs of Europe. This, according to the luminous and voluminous critic in the Courier, is

because their affairs are not under the management of a single person. Would the same argument prove that the affairs of Europe had better have been under the direction of one man? "The gods have not made" the writer in the Courier logical as well as "poetical." By the rule above hinted at, every actor is qualified to play Falstaff who is physically incapacitated to play any other character. Sir John Falstaffs may be fatted up like prize oxen. Nor does the evil in this case produce its own remedy, as where an actor's success depends upon his own leanness and that of the part he plays. Sir RICHARD STEELE tells us (in one of the Tatlers) of a poor actor in his time, who having nothing to do, fell away, and became such a wretched meagre-looking object, that he was pitched upon as a proper person to represent the starved Apothecary in Romeo and Juliet. He did this so much to the life, that he was repeatedly called upon to play it: but his person improving with his circumstances, he was in a short time rendered unfit to play it with the same effect as before, and laid aside. Having no other resource, he accordingly fell away again with the loss of his part, and was again called upon to appear in it with his former reputation. Any one, on the contrary, who thrives in Falstaff, is always in an increasing capacity to overlay the part.—But we have done with this unpleasant subject.

THEATRICAL DEBUTS.

Oct. 19, 1816.

THERE have been two theatrical or operatic debuts, to which we are in arrears, and of which we must say a word—Miss MORI's Rosetta in Love in a Village, at Covent-Garden, and Miss KEPPEL's Polly in the Beggars' Opera, at Drury-Lane. Both of them appeared to us to be indifferent. Miss MORI is by much the best singer of the two, but there is something exceedingly unprepossessing and hard both in her voice and manner. She sings without the least feeling, or lurking consciousness that such a thing is required in a singer. The notes proceed from her mouth as mechanically, as *unmitigated* by the sentiment, as if they came from the sharp hautboy or grating bassoon. We do not mean that her voice is disagreeable in itself, but it wants softness and sweetness of modulation. The words of the songs neither seem to tremble

on her lips, nor play around her heart. Miss Mori did not look the character. Rosetta is to be sure a waiting-maid, but then she is also a young lady in disguise. There was no appearance of the *incognita* in Miss Mori. She seemed in downright earnest, like one of the country girls who come to be hired at the statute-fair. She was quite insensible of her situation, and came forward to prove herself a fine singer, as one of her fellow-servants might have done to answer to a charge of having stolen something. We never saw a *debutante* more at ease with the audience: we suppose she has played in the country. Miss Matthews, who is a good-natured girl, and wished to *patronize* her on so delicate an emergency, presently found there was no occasion for her services, and withdrew from the attempt with some trepidation.

If Miss Mori did not enchant us by her incomprehensible want of sensibility, neither did Miss Keppel by the affectation of it. Sensibility is a very pretty thing, but it will not do to make a plaything of, at least in public. It is not enough that an actress tries to atone for defects by throwing herself on the indulgence of the audience :—their eyes and ears must be satisfied, as well as their self-love. Miss Keppel acts with very little grace, and sings very much out of tune. There were some attempts made to

prejudice the audience against this young lady before she appeared: but they only had the effect which they deserved, of procuring a more flattering reception than she would otherwise have met with: but we do not think she will ever become a favourite with the town.

MR. KEMBLE'S CATO.

Oct. 26, 1816.

Mr. Kemble has resumed his engagements at Covent-Garden Theatre for the season; it is said in the play-bills, for the last time. There is something in the word *last*, that, "being mortal," we do not like on these occasions: but there is this of good in it, that it throws us back on past recollections, and when we are about to take leave of an old friend, we feel desirous to settle all accounts with him, and to see that the balance is not against us, on the score of gratitude. Mr. Kemble will, we think, find that the public are just, and his last season, if it is to be so, will not, we hope, be the least brilliant of his career. As his meridian was bright, so let his sunset be golden, and without a cloud. His reception in Cato, on Friday, was most flattering, and he well deserved the cheering and cordial welcome which he received.

His voice only failed him in strength; but his tones, his looks, his gestures, were all that could be required in the character. He is the most classical of actors. He is the only one of the moderns, who both in figure and action approaches the beauty and grandeur of the antique. In the scene of the soliloquy, just before his death, he was rather inaudible, and indeed the speech itself is not worth hearing; but his person, manner, and dress, seemed cast in the very mould of Roman elegance and dignity.

THE IRON CHEST.

Nov. 30, 1816.

THE Iron Chest is founded on the story of Caleb Williams, one of the best novels in the language, and the very best of the modern school: but the play itself is by no means the best play that ever was written, either in ancient or modern times, though really in modern times we do not know of any much better. Mr. COLMAN'S serious style, which is in some measure an imitation of SHAKESPEAR'S, is natural and flowing; and there is a constant intermixture as in our elder drama, a *melange* of the tragic and comic; but there is rather a want of force and depth in the impassioned parts of his tragedies, and what there is of this kind, is impeded in its effect by the comic. The two plots (the serious and ludicrous) do not seem going on and gaining ground at the same time, but each part is intersected and crossed by the other, and has to set out again in the

next scene, after being thwarted in the former one, like a person who has to begin a story over again in which he has been interrupted. In SHAKESPEAR, the comic parts serve only as a relief to the tragic. COLMAN'S tragic scenes are not high-wrought enough to require any such relief; and this perhaps may be a sufficient reason why modern writers, who are so sparing of their own nerves, and those of their readers, should not be allowed to depart from the effeminate simplicity of the classic style. In SHAKESPEAR, again, the comic varieties are only an accompaniment to the loftier tragic movement: at least the only exception is in the part of Falstaff in Henry IV. which is not however a tragedy of any deep interest:—in COLMAN you do not know whether the comedy or tragedy is principal; whether he made the comic for the sake of the tragic, or the tragic for the sake of the comic; and you suspect he would be as likely as any of his cotemporaries to parody his own most pathetic passages, just as MUNDEN caricatures the natural touches of garrulous simplicity in old Adam Winterton, to make the galleries and boxes laugh. The great beauty of Caleb Williams is lost in the play. The interest of the novel arises chiefly from two things: the gradual working up of the curiosity of Caleb Williams with respect to the murder, by the incessant goading on of which he extorts the

secret from Falkland, and then from the systematic persecution which he undergoes from his master, which at length urges him to reveal the secret to the world. Both these are very ingeniously left out by Mr. COLMAN, who jumps at a conclusion, but misses his end.

The history of the Iron Chest is well known to dramatic readers. Mr. KEMBLE either could not, or would not play the part of Sir Edward Mortimer (the Falkland of Mr. GODWIN's novel) —he made nothing of it, or at least, made short work of it, for it was only played one night. He had a cough and a cold, and he hemmed and hawed, and whined and drivelled through the part in a marvellous manner. Mr. COLMAN was enraged at the ill success of his piece, and charged it upon KEMBLE's acting, who he said did not do his best. Now we confess he generally tries to do his best, and if that best is no better, it is not his fault. We think the fault was in the part, which wants circumstantial dignity. Give Mr. KEMBLE only the *man* to play, why, he is nothing; give him the paraphernalia of greatness, and he is great. He "wears his heart in compliment extern." He is the statue on the pedestal, that cannot come down without danger of shaming its worshippers; a figure that tells well with appropriate scenery and dresses; but not otherwise. Mr. KEMBLE contributes his own person to a

tragedy—but only that. The poet must furnish all the rest, and make the other parts equally dignified and graceful, or Mr. KEMBLE will not help him out. He will not lend dignity to the mean, spirit to the familiar; he will not impart life and motion, passion and imagination, to all around him, for he has neither life nor motion, passion nor imagination in himself. He minds only the conduct of his own person, and leaves the piece to shift for itself. Not so Mr. KEAN. "Truly he hath a devil;" and if the fit comes over him too often, yet as tragedy is not the representation of *still-life*, we think this much better than being never roused at all. We like

> "The fiery soul that working out its way,
> "Fretted the pigmy body to decay,
> "And o'er inform'd the tenement of clay."

Mr. KEAN has passion and energy enough to afford to lend it to the circumstances in which he is placed, without leaning upon them for support. He can make a dialogue between a master and a servant in common life, tragic, or infuse a sentiment into the Iron Chest. He is not afraid of being let down by his company. Formal dignity and studied grace are ridiculous, except in particular circumstances; passion and nature are every where the same, and these Mr. KEAN carries with him into all his characters, and does not want the others. In the last,

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however, which are partly things of manner and assumption, he improves, as well as in the recitation of set speeches; for example, in the Soliloquy on Honour, in the present play. His description of the assassination of his rival to Wilford was admirable, and the description of his "seeing his giant form roll before him in the dust," was terrific and grand. In the picturesque expression of passion, by outward action, Mr. KEAN is unrivalled. The transitions in this play, from calmness to deep despair, from concealed suspicion to open rage, from smooth decorous indifference to the convulsive agonies of remorse, gave Mr. KEAN frequent opportunities for the display of his peculiar talents. The mixture of common-place familiarity and solemn injunction in his speeches to Wilford when in the presence of others, was what no other actor could give with the same felicity and force. The last scene of all—his coming to life again after his swooning at the fatal discovery of his guilt, and then falling back after a ghastly struggle, like a man waked from the tomb, into despair and death in the arms of his mistress, was one of those consummations of the art, which those who have seen and have not felt them in this actor, may be assured that they have never seen or felt any thing in the course of their lives, and never will to the end of them.

MR. KEMBLE'S KING JOHN.

Covent-Garden, Dec. 7, 1816.

We wish we had never seen Mr. Kean. He has destroyed the Kemble religion; and it is the religion in which we were brought up. Never again shall we behold Mr. Kemble with the same pleasure that we did, nor see Mr. Kean with the same pleasure that we have seen Mr. Kemble formerly. We used to admire Mr. Kemble's figure and manner, and had no idea that there was any want of art or nature. We feel the force and nature of Mr. Kean's acting, but then we feel the want of Mr. Kemble's person. Thus an old and delightful prejudice is destroyed, and no new enthusiasm, no second idolatry comes to take its place. Thus, by degrees, knowledge robs us of pleasure, and the cold icy hand of experience freezes up the warm current of the imagination, and crusts it over with unfeeling criticism. The knowledge we acquire of various kinds of excellence, as succes-

sive opportunities present themselves, leads us to require a combination of them which we never find realized in any individual, and all the consolation for the disappointment of our fastidious expectations is in a sort of fond and doating retrospect of the past. It is possible indeed that the force of prejudice might often kindly step in to suspend the chilling effects of experience, and we might be able to see an old favourite by a voluntary forgetfulness of other things, as we saw him twenty years ago; but his friends take care to prevent this, and by provoking invidious comparisons, and crying up their idol as a model of abstract perfection, force us to be ill-natured in our own defence.

We went to see Mr. KEMBLE'S *King John*, and he became the part so well, in costume, look, and gesture, that if left to ourselves, we could have gone to sleep over it, and dreamt that it was fine, and "when we waked, have cried to dream again." But we were told that it was really fine, as fine as GARRICK, as fine as Mrs. SIDDONS, as fine as SHAKESPEAR; so we rubbed our eyes and kept a sharp look out, but we saw nothing but a deliberate intention on the part of Mr. KEMBLE to act the part finely. And so he did in a certain sense, but not by any means as SHAKESPEAR wrote it, nor as it might be played. He did not harrow up the feelings, he did not electrify the sense: he did not enter

into the nature of the part himself, nor consequently move others with terror or pity. The introduction to the scene with Hubert was certainly excellent: you saw instantly, and before a syllable was uttered, partly from the change of countenance, and partly from the arrangement of the scene, the purpose which had entered his mind to murder the young prince. But the remainder of this trying scene, though the execution was elaborate—painfully elaborate, and the outline well conceived, wanted the filling up, the true and master touches, the deep piercing heartfelt tones of nature. It was done well and skilfully, *according to the book of arithmetic;* but no more. Mr. KEMBLE, when he approaches Hubert to sound his disposition, puts on an insidious, insinuating, fawning aspect, and so he ought; but we think it should not be, though it was, that kind of wheedling smile, as if he was going to persuade him that the business he wished him to undertake was a mere jest; and his natural repugnance to it an idle prejudice, that might be carried off by a certain pleasant drollery of eye and manner. Mr. KEMBLE's look, to our apprehension, was exactly as if he had just caught the eye of some person of his acquaintance in the boxes, and was trying to suppress a rising smile at the metamorphosis he had undergone since dinner. Again, he changes his voice three several times, in repeating the

name of Hubert; and the changes might be fine, but they did not vibrate on our feelings; so we cannot tell. They appeared to us like a tragic *voluntary*. Through almost the whole scene this celebrated actor did not seem to feel the part itself as it was set down for him, but to be considering how he ought to feel it, or how he should express by rule and method what he did not feel. He was sometimes slow, and sometimes hurried: sometimes familiar, and sometimes solemn: but always with an evident design and determination to be so. The varying tide of passion did not appear to burst from the source of nature in his breast, but to be drawn from a theatrical leaden cistern, and then directed through certain conduit-pipes and artificial channels, to fill the audience with well regulated and harmless sympathy.

We are afraid, judging from the effects of this representation, that "man delight not us, nor woman neither:" for we did not like Miss O'Neill's Constance better, nor so well as Mr. Kemble's King John. This character, more than any other of Shakespear's females, treads perhaps upon the verge of extravagance; the impatience of grief, combined with the violence of her temper, borders on insanity: her imagination grows light-headed. But still the boundary between poetry and phrensy is not passed: she is neither a virago nor mad. Miss O'Neill gave more of

the vulgar than the poetical side of the character. She generally does so of late. Mr. CHARLES KEMBLE in the Bastard, had the "bulk, the thews, the sinews" of Falconbridge: would that he had had "the spirit" too. There was one speech which he gave well—"Could Sir Robert make this leg?" And suiting the action to the word, as well he might, it had a great effect upon the house.

CORIOLANUS.

Dec. 14, 1816.

CORIOLANUS has of late been repeatedly acted at Covent-Garden Theatre. SHAKESPEAR has in this play shewn himself well versed in history and state-affairs. Coriolanus is a storehouse of political common-places. Any one who studies it may save himself the trouble of reading BURKE's Reflections, or PAINE's Rights of Man, or the Debates in both Houses of Parliament since the French Revolution or our own. The arguments for and against aristocracy, or democracy, on the privileges of the few and the claims of the many, on liberty and slavery, power and the abuse of it, peace and war, are here very ably handled, with the spirit of a poet, and the acuteness of a philosopher. SHAKESPEAR himself seems to have had a leaning to the arbitrary side of the question, perhaps from some feeling of contempt for his own origin; and

to have spared no occasion of baiting the rabble. What he says of them is very true: what he says of their betters is also very true, though he dwells less upon it. The cause of the people is indeed but ill calculated as a subject for poetry: it admits of rhetoric, which goes into argument and explanation, but it presents no immediate or distinct images to the mind, "no jutting frieze, buttress, or coigne of vantage" for poetry "to make its pendant bed and procreant cradle in." The language of poetry naturally falls in with the language of power. The imagination is an exaggerating and exclusive faculty: it takes from one thing to add to another: it accumulates circumstances together to give the greatest possible effect to a favourite object. The understanding is a dividing and measuring faculty: it judges of things, not according to their immediate impression on the mind, but according to their relations to one another. The one is a monopolizing faculty, which seeks the greatest quantity of present excitement by inequality and disproportion; the other is a distributive faculty, which seeks the greatest quantity of ultimate good by justice and proportion. The one is an aristocratical, the other a republican faculty. The principle of poetry is a very anti-levelling principle. It aims at effect, it exists by contrast, It admits of no medium. It is every thing by excess. It rises above the ordinary standard of

sufferings and crimes. It presents an imposing appearance. It shews its head turretted, crowned and crested. Its front is gilt and blood-stained. Before it, "it carries noise, and behind it, it leaves tears." It has its altars and its victims, sacrifices, human sacrifices. Kings, priests, nobles, are its train-bearers; tyrants and slaves its executioners—"Carnage is its daughter!" Poetry is right royal. It puts the individual for the species, the one above the infinite many, might before right. A lion hunting a flock of sheep or a herd of wild asses, is a more poetical object than they; and we even take part with the lordly beast, because our vanity, or some other feeling, makes us disposed to place ourselves in the situation of the strongest party. So we feel some concern for the poor citizens of Rome, when they meet together to compare their wants and grievances, till Coriolanus comes in, and, with blows and big words, drives this set of "poor rats," this rascal scum, to their homes and beggary, before him. There is nothing heroical in a multitude of miserable rogues not wishing to be starved, or complaining that they are like to be so; but when a single man comes forward to brave their cries, and to make them submit to the last indignities, from mere pride and self-will, our admiration of his prowess is immediately converted into contempt for their pusillanimity. The insolence of

power is stronger than the plea of necessity. The tame submission to usurped authority, or even the natural resistance to it, has nothing to excite or flatter the imagination; it is the assumption of a right to insult or oppress others, that carries an imposing air of superiority with it. We had rather be the oppressor than the oppressed.

The love of power in ourselves, and the admiration of it in others, are both natural to man; the one makes him a tyrant, the other a slave. Wrong, dressed out in pride, pomp, and circumstance, has more attraction than abstract right.—Coriolanus complains of the fickleness of the people: yet the instant he cannot gratify his pride and obstinacy at their expense, he turns his arms against his country. If his country was not worth defending, why did he build his pride on its defence? He is a conqueror and a hero; he conquers other countries, and makes this a plea for enslaving his own; and when he is prevented from doing so, he leagues with its enemies to destroy his country. He rates the people "as if he were a God to punish, and not a man of their infirmity." He scoffs at one of their tribunes for maintaining their rites and franchises: "Mark you his absolute *shall?*" not marking his own absolute *will* to take every thing from them; his impatience of the slightest opposition to his own pretensions being in pro-

portion to their arrogance and absurdity. If the great and powerful had the beneficence and wisdom of gods, then all this would have been well: if with greater knowledge of what is good for the people, they had as great a care for their interest as they have for their own; if they were seated above the world, sympathising with their welfare, but not feeling the passions of men, receiving neither good nor hurt from them, but bestowing their benefits as free gifts on them, they might then rule over them like another Providence. But this is not the case. Coriolanus is unwilling that the Senate should shew their "cares" for the people, lest their "cares" should be construed into "fears," to the subversion of all due authority; and he is no sooner disappointed in his schemes to deprive the people not only of the cares of the state, but of all power to redress themselves, than Volumnia is made madly to exclaim,

"Now the red pestilence strike all trades in Rome,
"And occupations perish."

This is but natural: it is but natural for a mother to have more regard for her son than for a whole city: but then the city should be left to take some care of itself. The care of the state cannot, we here see, be safely entrusted to maternal affection, or to the domestic charities of

high life. The great have private feelings of their own, to which the interests of humanity and justice must courtesy. Their interests are so far from being the same as those of the community, that they are in direct and necessary opposition to them; their power is at the expense of our weakness; their riches, of our poverty; their pride, of our degradation; their splendour, of our wretchedness; their tyranny, of our servitude. If they had the superior intelligence ascribed to them (which they have not) it would only render them so much more formidable; and from gods would convert them into devils.

The whole dramatic moral of Coriolanus is, that those who have little shall have less, and that those who have much shall take all that others have left. The people are poor, therefore they ought to be starved. They are slaves, therefore they ought to be beaten. They work hard, therefore they ought to be treated like beasts of burden. They are ignorant, therefore they ought not to be allowed to feel that they want food, or clothing, or rest, that they are enslaved, oppressed, and miserable. This is the logic of the imagination and the passions; which seek to aggrandize what excites admiration, and to heap contempt on misery, to raise power into tyranny, and to make tyranny absolute; to thrust down that which is low still lower, and to make wretches desperate: to exalt magistrates into

kings, kings into gods; to degrade subjects to the rank of slaves, and slaves to the condition of brutes. The history of mankind is a romance, a mask, a tragedy constructed upon the principles of *poetical justice;* it is a noble or royal hunt, in which what is sport to the few, is death to the many, and in which the spectators halloo and encourage the strong to set upon the weak, and cry havoc in the chase, though they do not share in the spoil. We may depend upon it, that what men delight to read in books, they will put in practice in reality.

Mr. KEMBLE in the part of Coriolanus was as great as ever. Miss O'NEILL as Volumnia was not so great as Mrs. SIDDONS. There is a *fleshiness*, if we may so say, about her whole manner, voice, and person, which does not suit the character of the Roman Matron. One of the most amusing things in the representation of this play is the contrast between KEMBLE and little SIMMONS. The former seems as if he would gibbet the latter on his nose, he looks so lofty. The fidgetting, uneasy, insignificant gestures of SIMMONS are perhaps a little caricatured; and KEMBLE'S supercilious airs and *nonchalance* remind one of the unaccountable abstracted air, the contracted eye-brows and suspended chin of a man who is just going to sneeze.

THE MAN OF THE WORLD.

Covent-Garden, Dec. 28, 1816.

Mr. Henry Johnston (from the Glasgow Theatre) who came out some time ago in Sir Archy Mac Sarcasm, with much applause, appeared on Friday, in Sir Pertinax Mac Sycophant. During the first acts, he went through this highly, but finely coloured part, with great spirit and force: but in the midst of his account to his son Egerton, of the manner in which he rose in the world by *booing*, and by marrying an old dowager, "like a surgeon's skeleton in a glass-case," a certain disapprobation, not of the actor, but of the sentiments of the character, manifested itself through the house, which at this season of the year is not of a very refined composition; and some one cried out from the gallery for "another play." So little do the vulgar know of courts and the great world, that they are even shocked and disgusted at the satirical

representation of them on the stage. This unexpected interruption given to the actor in the most prominent scene of the play, operated to damp his spirits considerably, nor did he rally completely again for the rest of the evening.

This is the second time that we have seen an actor fail in this character, not by any fault in himself, but by the fault of the Managers, in bringing them out in this part in the holiday season. The other was Mr. BIBBY last year, certainly not inferior to Mr. JOHNSTON in the conception or delineation of the sordid, gross, wily Scotchman: but who was equally or more unsuccessful, from the unintelligibility of the Scotch dialect and sentiments to the untutored and "unclerkly" Christmas visitants. Upon the entrance indeed of Lord CASTLEREAGH and some company of the higher classes, into the Prince's box, Mr. JOHNSTON seemed to recover himself a little, and to appeal with more confidence from the ignorance of the rabble to these more judicious appreciators of the merits of his delineation of MACKLIN's idea of a modern statesman.

We wonder the Managers of either Theatre ever bring out a comedy relating to the artificial manners of high life, on occasions like the present. They ought either to have a tragedy and a pantomime, or two pantomimes the same evening; or a melo-drama, a puppet-show, and a pantomime. The common people like that

which strikes their senses or their imagination: they do not like Comedy, because, if it is genteel, they do not understand the subject matter of which it treats—and if it relates to low manners and incidents, it has no novelty to recommend it. They like the dazzling and the wonderful. One of the objections constantly made by some persons who sat near us in the pit, to the play of the Man of the World, was, that the same scene continued through the whole play. This was a great disappointment to the pantomime appetite for rapid and wonderful changes of scenery, with which our dramatic novices had come fully prepared.

The pantomime, with Mr. GRIMALDI, soon brought all to rights, and the audience drank in oblivion of all their grievances with the first tones of their old friend JOE's voice, for which indeed he might be supposed to have a patent. This great man (we really think him the greatest man we saw at the theatre last night) will not "die and leave the world no copy," as SHAKESPEAR has it, for his son is as like him in person as two peas. The new pantomime itself, or the "Beggar of Bethnal-green," is not a very good one. It has a clever dog and a rope-dancing monkey in it. The degeneracy of the modern stage threatens to be shortly redeemed by accomplished recruits from the four-footed creation. The monkey was hissed and encored, but this is the fate of all up-

start candidates for popular applause, and we hope that *Monsieur* will console himself for this partial ill-will and prejudice manifested against him, by the reflection that envy is the shadow of merit.—Miss F. DENNETT was the Columbine, and played very prettily as the daughter of the Blind Beggar. But who shall describe the *pas de trois* by the three Miss DENNETTS, "ever charming, ever new," and yet just the same as when we saw them before, and as we always wish to see them? If they were at all different from what they are, or from one another, it would be for the worse. The charm is in seeing the same grace, the same looks, the same motions, in three persons. They are a lovely reflection of one another. The colours in the rainbow are not more soft and harmonious; the image of the halcyon reflected on the azure bosom of the smiling ocean is not more soft and delightful.

JANE SHORE.

Drury-Lane, Jan. 4, 1817.

Miss Somerville, who gave so interesting a promise of a fine tragic actress in the part of Imogine in Bertram, last year, appeared the other evening in Alicia in Jane Shore. We do not think Rowe's heroine so well adapted to the display of her powers as that of the modern poet. Miss Somerville is a very delightful sentimental actress, but she makes an indifferent scold. Alicia should be a shrew, and shrill-tongued: but Mis Somerville throws a pensive repentant tone over her bitterest imprecations against her rival, and her mode of recitation is one melancholy cadence of the whole voice, silvered over with sweet gleams of sound, like the moonbeams playing on the heaving ocean. When she should grow sharp and virulent, she only becomes more amiable and romantic, and tries in vain to be disagreeable. Though her voice is

out of her controul, she yet succeeds in putting on a peevish dissatisfied look, which yet has too much of a mournful, sanctified cast. If Mr. COLERIDGE could write a tragedy for her, we should then see the Muse of the romantic drama exhibited in perfection. The fault of Miss SOMERVILLE, in short, is, that her delivery is too mannered, and her action without sufficient variety.

Mr. BENGOUGH, as the Duke of Gloster, was in one or two scenes impressive, in others ridiculous. He has a singular kind of awkward energy and heavy animation about him. He works himself up occasionally to considerable force and spirit; and then, as if frightened at his own efforts, his purpose fails him, and he sinks into an unaccountable vein of faltering insipidity. The great merit of Mr. KEAN is his thorough decision and self-possession: he always knows what he means to do, and never flinches from doing it.

THE HUMOROUS LIEUTENANT.

Jan. 25, 1817.

THE Humorous Lieutenant, brought out on Saturday week at Covent-Garden, is a bad alteration from one of the most indifferent of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER'S plays. It went off very ill, and was as fairly damned as any thing at Covent-Garden could be. They have some *jus theatricum* here, which saves things and carries off appearances. So the play has been brought forward again, and its first failure attributed to the failure of the actress who played the part of Celia. That was certainly a failure, and an unexpected one; for the lady's accomplishments and attractions had been much spoken of, and perhaps justly. Of her talents for the stage, we shall say nothing; for we cannot say a word or syllable in their favour. Nor shall we say any thing against "The Humorous Lieutenant:" for it passes under the name of BEAUMONT and

FLETCHER, "whose utmost skirts of glory we behold gladly, and far off their steps adore:" and indeed it is at an immeasurable distance, and by a prodigious stretch of faith, that we see them at all in the Covent-Garden *refaccimento*. Mr. LISTON plays the heroic Lieutenant in it; but we shall live to see him in the *mock-heroic* again!

TWO NEW BALLETS.

Feb. 8, 1817.

THERE have been two new ballets this week, one at each Theatre. That at Drury-Lane, Patrick's Return, is one of the prettiest things we have seen a long time. The dancing and pantomime are very delightfully adapted to a number of old Irish melodies, which we are never tired of hearing.—Zephyr and Flora, at Covent-Garden, is too fine by half for our rude tastes. There are lusty lovers flying in the air, nests of winged Cupids, that start out of bulrushes, trees that lift up their branches like arms:—we suppose they will speak next like VIRGIL's wood. But in the midst of all these wonders, we have a more amiable wonder, the three Miss DENNETTS, as nymphs,

> "Whom lovely Venus at a birth
> "To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore."

They might represent Love, Hope, and Joy. There is one part in which they seem to dance on the strings of the harp which plays to them; the liquid sounds and the motion are the same. These young ladies put us in mind of Florizel's praise of Perdita:—

"When you do dance, I wish you a wave o' th' sea,
"That you might ever do nothing but that;
"Move still, still so, and own no other function."

MR. BOOTH'S DUKE OF GLOSTER.

Covent-Garden, Feb. 15, 1817.

A GENTLEMAN of the name of BOOTH, who we understand has been acting with considerable applause at Worthing and Brighton, came out in Richard Duke of Gloster, at this Theatre, on Wednesday. We do not know well what to think of his powers, till we see him in some part in which he is more himself. His face is adapted to tragic characters, and his voice wants neither strength nor musical expression. But almost the whole of his performance was an exact copy or parody of Mr. KEAN's manner of doing the same part. It was a complete, but at the same time a successful piece of plagiarism. We do not think this kind of second-hand reputation can last upon the London boards for more than a character or two. In the country these *doubles* of the best London performers go down very well, for they are the best they can get, and

they have not the originals to make invidious comparisons with. But it will hardly do to bring out the same entertainment that we can have as it is first served up at Drury-Lane, in a hashed state at Covent-Garden. We do not blame Mr. Booth for borrowing Mr. Kean's coat and feathers to appear in upon a first and trying occasion, but if he wishes to gain a permanent reputation, he must come forward in his own person. He must try to be original, and not content himself with treading in another's steps. We say this the rather, because, as far as we could judge, Mr. Booth in point of execution did those passages the best, in which he now and then took leave of Mr. Kean's decided and extreme manner, and became more mild and tractable. Such was his recitation of the soliloquy on his own ambitious projects, and of that which occurs the night before the battle. In these he seemed to yield to the impulse of his own feelings, and to follow the natural tones and cadence of his voice. They were the best parts of his performance. The worst were those where he imitated, or rather caricatured Mr. Kean's hoarseness of delivery and violence of action, and affected an energy without seeming to feel it. Such were his repulse of Buckingham, his exclamation, "What does he in the north," &c. his telling the attendants to set down the corse of King Henry, &c. The scene with Lady

Anne, on the contrary, which was of a softer and more insinuating kind, he was more successful in, and though still a palpable imitation of Mr. KEAN, it had all the originality that imitation could have, for he seemed to feel it. His manner of saying "good night," and of answering, when he received the anonymous paper, "A weak invention of the enemy," we consider as mere tricks in the art, which no one but a professed mimic has a right to play. The dying scene was without effect.—The greatest drawback to Mr. BOOTH's acting is a perpetual strut, and unwieldy swagger in his ordinary gait and manner, which, though it may pass at Brighton for *grand, gracious, and magnificent,* even the lowest of the mob will laugh at in London. This is the third imitation of Mr. KEAN we have seen attempted, and the only one that has not been a complete failure. The imitation of original genius is the *forlorn hope* of the candidates for fame:—its faults are so easily overdone, its graces are so hard to catch. A KEMBLE school we can understand: a KEAN school is, we suspect, a contradiction in terms. Art may be taught, because it is learnt: Nature can neither be taught nor learnt. The secrets of Art may be said to have a common or *pass* key to unlock them; the secrets of Nature have but one master-key—the heart.

Drury-Lane.

THE charming afterpiece of Figaro, or the Follies of a Day, has been revived here, and revived with all its gloss and lustre. Miss KELLY, Mrs. ALSOP, and Mrs. ORGER, were all very happy in it. This play was written by a man who drank light French wines: in every line you see the brisk champaign frothing through green glasses. The beads rise sparkling to the surface and then evaporate. There is nothing in it to remember, and absolutely nothing to criticise; but it is the triumph of animal spirits: while you see it, you seem to drink ether, or to inhale an atmosphere not bred of fogs or sea-coal fires. This is the secret of the charm of Figaro. It promotes the circulation of the blood, and assists digestion. We would by all means advise our readers to go and try the experiment. The best scene in it, is that in which the Page jumps from his concealment behind the arm-chair into the arm-chair itself. The beauty of this is in fact the perfect *heartfelt* indifference to detection; and so of the rest.—We never saw Mr. RAE play better.

MR. BOOTH'S IAGO.

Drury-Lane, Feb. 22, 1817.

THE Managers of Covent-Garden Theatre, after having announced in the bills, that Mr. BOOTH's Richard the Third had met with a success unprecedented in the annals of histrionic fame, (which, to do them justice, was not the case), very disinterestedly declined engaging him at more than two pounds a week, as report speaks. Now we think they were wrong, either in puffing him so unmercifully, or in haggling with him so pitifully. It was either trifling with the public or with the actor. The consequence, as it has turned out, has been, that Mr. BOOTH, who was to start as "the fell opposite" of Mr. KEAN, has been taken by the hand by that gentleman, who was an old fellow-comedian of his in the country, and engaged at Drury-Lane at a salary of ten pounds per week. So we hear. And it was in evident allusion to this

circumstance, that when Mr. Booth, as Iago, said on Thursday night, "I know my price no less"—John Bull, who has very sympathetic pockets, gave a loud shout of triumph, which resounded along all the benches of the pit. We must say that Mr. Booth pleased us much more in Iago than in Richard. He was, it is true, well supported by Mr. Kean in Othello, but he also supported him better in that character than any one else we have seen play with him. The two rival actors hunt very well in couple. One thing which we did not expect, and which we think reconciled us to Mr. Booth's imitations, was, that they were here performed in the presence, and as it were with the permission of Mr. Kean. There is no fear of deception in the case. The original is there in person to answer for his identity, and "give the world assurance of himself." The original and the copy go together, like the substance and the shadow. But then there neither is nor can be any idea of competition, and so far we are satisfied. In fact, Mr. Booth's Iago was a very close and spirited repetition of Mr. Kean's manner of doing that part. It was indeed the most spirited copy we ever saw upon the stage, considering at the same time the scrupulous exactness with which he adhered to his model in the most trifling *minutiæ*. We need only mention as instances of similarity in the bye-play, Mr. Booth's mode of deliver-

ing the lines, "My wit comes from my brains like birdlime," or his significant, and we think improper pointing to the dead bodies, as he goes out in the last scene. The same remarks apply to his delivery, that we made last week. He has two voices; one his own, and the other Mr. KEAN'S. His delineation of Iago is more bustling and animated; Mr. KEAN'S is more close and cool. We suspect that Mr. BOOTH is not only a professed and deliberate imitator of Mr. KEAN, but that he has in general the cameleon quality (we do not mean that of living upon air, as the Covent-Garden Managers supposed, but) of reflecting all objects that come in contact with him. We occasionally caught the mellow tones of Mr. MACREADY rising out of the thorough-bass of Mr. KEAN'S guttural emphasis, and the flaunting, *degagé* robe of Mr. YOUNG'S oriental manner, flying off from the tight vest and tunic of the little "bony prizer" of the Drury-Lane Company.

Of Mr. KEAN'S Othello we have not room to speak as it deserves, nor have we the power if we had the room: it is beyond all praise. Any one who has not seen him in the third act of Othello (and seen him near) cannot have an idea of perfect tragic acting.

MR. BOOTH'S RICHARD.

Covent-Garden, March 1, 1817.

THIS Theatre was a scene of the greatest confusion and uproar we ever witnessed (not having been present at the O. P. rows) on Tuesday evening, in consequence of the re-appearance of Mr. BOOTH here, after he had entered into an engagement and performed at Drury-Lane. For our own parts, who are but simple diplomatists, either in theatricals or politics, the resentment and disapprobation of the audience appear to us to have been quite well-founded. The only fault we find with the expression of the public indignation is, that it was directed solely against Mr. BOOTH, whereas the Managers of the Theatre were entitled to the first and fullest share. Mr. BOOTH may have been only *their* dupe: they have wilfully trifled with the public, and tried to make a contemptible tool of a person belonging to a profession by which they

exist, and from which they derive all their importance with the public. Their only excuse for inveigling an actor whom they refused to engage, from another Theatre where he had been engaged in consequence of such refusal, is, that by the rules of theatrical proceeding, one theatre has no right to engage an actor who has been in *treaty* for an engagement at the other, within a year after the breaking off of such treaty, without leave of the Managers. First, it appears that no such understanding exists, or is acted upon: that the pretext, as a mere pretext, is not true: secondly, such a mutual understanding, if it did exist, would be most unjust to the profession, and an insult to the public. For at this rate, any Manager, by once entering into an agreement with an actor, may keep him dangling on his good pleasure for a year certain, may prevent his getting any other engagement, by saying that they are still in a progress of arrangement, though all arrangement is broken off, may deprive an ingenious and industrious man of his bread, and the public of the advantage of his talents, till the Managers, at the expiration of this probationary year of non-performance, once more grant him his *Habeas Corpus*, and release him from the restrictions and obligations of his non-engagement. The obvious questions for the public to decide are these: Why, having announced Mr.

Booth as a prodigy of success after his first appearance in Richard, the Managers declined to give Mr. Booth any but a very paltry salary? In this they either deceived the town, or acted with injustice to Mr. Booth, because they thought him in their power. Why, the instant he was engaged at the other Theatre at a handsome salary, and on his own terms, and had played there with success, they wanted to have him back, employed threats as it should seem to induce him to return, and gave him a larger salary than he had even obtained at Drury-Lane? Whether, if he had not been engaged at the other theatre, they would have engaged him at their own upon the terms to which they have agreed to entice him back? Whether, in short, in the whole proceeding, they have had any regard either to professional merit, or to public gratification, or to any thing but their own cunning and self-interest? The questions for Mr. Booth to answer are, why, after his treatment by the Covent-Garden Company, he applied to the Drury-Lane Company; and why, after their liberal behaviour, he deserted back again, on the first overture, to the company that had discarded him? Why he did not act on Saturday night, if he was able: or at any rate, state, to prevent the charge of duplicity, his new engagement with his old benefactors? Whether, if Mr. Booth had not made this new

arrangement, he would not have acted in spite of indisposition or weak nerves? Lastly, whether the real motive which led Mr. Booth to fall in so unadvisedly with the renewed and barefaced proposals of the Covent-Garden Company, was not the renewed hope dawning in his breast, of still signalising himself, by dividing the town with Mr. Kean, instead of playing a second part to him, which is all he could ever hope to do on the same theatre? But enough of this disagreeable and disgraceful affair. The only way to make it up with the public would be, as we are convinced, not by attempts at vindication, but by an open apology.

Drury-Lane.

The new farce of Frightened to Death, is the most amusing and original piece of invention that we have seen for a long time. The execution might be better, but the idea is good, and as far as we know, perfectly new. Harley, Jack Phantom, in a drunken bout, is beaten by the watch, and brought senseless to the house of his mistress, Mrs. Orger, who, in order to cure him of his frolics, determines to dress him up in an old wrapping-gown like a shroud, and persuade him that he is dead. When he

awakes, he at first does not recollect where he is: the first thing he sees is a letter from his friend to his mistress, giving an account of his sad catastrophe, and speaking of the manner in which order is to be taken for his burial. Soon after, his mistress and her maid come in in mourning, lament over his loss, and as has been agreed beforehand, take no notice of Phantom, who in vain presents himself before them, and thus is made to personate his own ghost. The servant, Mumps (Mr. KNIGHT), who is in the secret, also comes in, and staggers Phantom's belief in his own identity still more, by neither seeing nor hearing him. The same machinery is played off upon him in a different mode by MUNDEN's coming in, and taking him for a ghost. A very laughable dialogue and duet here take place between the Ghost and the Ghost-seer, the latter inquiring of him with great curiosity about his ancestors in the other world, and being desirous to cultivate an acquaintance with the living apparition, in the hope of obtaining some insight into the state of that state "from which no traveller returns." There was a foolish song about "Kisses" at the beginning, which excited some little displeasure, but the whole went off with great and deserved applause.

DOUBLE GALLANT.

Drury-Lane, April 12, 1817.

CIBBER's Comedy of the Double Gallant has been revived at this Theatre with considerable success. POPE did CIBBER a great piece of injustice, when he appointed him to receive the crown of dulness. It was mere spleen in POPE; and the provocation to it seems to have been an excess of flippant vivacity in the constitution of CIBBER. That CIBBER's Birth-day Odes were dull, seems to have been the common fault of the subject, rather than a particular objection to the poet. In his Apology for his own Life, he is one of the most amusing of coxcombs; happy in conscious vanity, teeming with animal spirits, uniting the self-sufficiency of youth with the garrulity of age; and in his plays he is not less entertaining and agreeably familiar with the audience. His personal character predominates indeed over the inventiveness of his muse;

but so far from being dull, he is every where light, fluttering, and airy. We could wish we had a few more such dull fellows; they would contribute to make the world pass away more pleasantly! CIBBER, in short, though his name has been handed down to us as a bye-word of impudent pretension by the classical pen of his rival, who did not admit of any merit beyond the narrow circle of wit and friendship in which he moved, was a gentleman and a scholar of the old school; a man of wit and pleasantry in conversation; an excellent actor; an admirable dramatic critic; and one of the best comic writers of his age. Instead of being a *caput mortuum* of literature, (always excepting what is always to be excepted, his Birth-day Odes) he had a vast deal of its spirit, and too much of the froth. But the eye of ill-nature or prejudice, which is attracted by the shining points of character in others, generally transposes their good qualities, and absurdly denies them the very excellences which excite its chagrin.—CIBBER's Careless Husband is a master-piece of easy gaiety; and his Double Gallant, though it cannot rank in the first, may take its place in the second class of comedies. It is full of character, bustle, and stage-effect. It belongs to the composite style, and very happily mixes up the comedy of intrigue, such as we see it in Mrs. CENTLIVRE's Spanish plots, with a tolerable

share of the wit and sentiment of CONGREVE and VANBURGH. As there is a good deal of wit, there is a spice of wickedness in this play, which was the privilege of the good old style of comedy, when vice, perhaps from being less common, was less catching than it is at present. It was formerly a thing more to be wondered at than imitated; and behind the rigid barriers of religion and morality might be exposed freely, without the danger of any serious practical consequences; but now that the safeguards of wholesome prejudices are removed, we seem afraid to trust our eyes or ears with a single situation or expression of a loose tendency, as if the mere mention of licentiousness implied a conscious approbation of it, and the extreme delicacy of our moral sense would be debauched by the bare suggestion of the possibility of vice. The luscious vein of the dialogue in many of the scenes is stopped short in the revived play, though not before we perceive its object—

——— "In hidden mazes running,
"With wanton haste and giddy cunning!"

We noticed more than one of these *double meanings*, which however passed off without any marks of reprobation, for unless they are made pretty broad, the audience, from being accustomed to the cautious purity of the modern drama, are not very expert in decyphering the

equivocal allusion.—All the characters in the Double Gallant are very well kept up, and they were most of them well supported in the representation. At-All and Lady Dainty are the two most prominent characters in the original comedy, and those into which CIBBER has put most of his own nature and genius. They are the essence of active impertinence and sickly affectation. At-All has three intrigues upon his hands at once, and manages them all with the dexterity with which an adept shuffles a pack of cards. His cool impudence is equal to his wonderful vivacity. He jumps, by mere volubility of tongue and limbs, under three several names into three several assignations with three several *incognitas*, whom he meets at the same house, as they happen to be mutual friends. He would succeed with them all, but that he is detected by them all round, and then he can hardly be said to fail, for he carries off the best of them at last (Mrs. MARDYN), who not being able to seduce him from her rivals by any other means, resorts to a disguise, and vanquishes him in love by disarming him in a duel. The scene in which At-All, who had made love to Clorinda as Colonel Standfast, is introduced to her by her cousin (who is also in love with him) as Mr. Freeman, and while he is disowning his personal identity, is surprised by the arrival of Lady Sadlife, to whom he had been making the same

irresistible overtures, is one of the best *coup d'œils* of the theatre we have seen for a long time. HARLEY acts this character laughably, but not very judiciously. He bustles through it with the liveliness of a footman, not with the manners of a gentleman. He never changes his character with his dress, but still he is a pleasant fellow in himself, and is so happy in the applause he receives, that we are sorry to find any fault with him. Mrs. ALSOP's Lady Dainty was a much better, but a much less agreeable piece of acting. The affected sensibility, the pretended disorders, the ridiculous admiration of novelty, and the languid caprices of this character, were given by the actress with an overpowering truth of effect. The mixture of folly, affectation, pride, insensibility, and spleen which constitute the character of the fine lady, as it existed in the days of CIBBER, and is delineated in this comedy, is hardly to be tolerated in itself, with every advantage of grace, youth, beauty, dress, and fashion. But Mrs. ALSOP gave only the inherent vice and ridiculous folly of the character, without any external accomplishments to conceal or adorn it. She has always the same painful "frontlet" on: the same uneasy expression of face and person. Her affected distortions seemed to arise from real pain; nor was her delight in mischief and absurdity counteracted by any palliating circum-

stances of elegance or beauty. A character of this description ought *only* to appeal to the understanding, and not to offend the senses. We do not know how to soften this censure; but we will add, that Mrs. Alsop, in all her characters, shews sense, humour, and spirit.

Dowton and Miss Kelly, as Sir Solomon Sadlife and Wishwell, are two for a pair. We do not wish to see a better actor or actress. The effect which both these performers produce, is the best and strongest that can be, because they never try to produce an effect. Their style of acting is the reverse of grimace or caricature. They never overcharge or force any thing, and their humour is so much the more irresistible in its appeal, as it seems to come from them in spite of themselves. Instead of wanting to shew their talents to the audience, they seem hardly conscious of them themselves. All their excellence is natural, unaffected, involuntary. When the sense of absurdity is so strong that it cannot be contained any longer, it bursts out; and the expression of their feelings commands our sympathy, because they do not appear to court it. Their nature is downright sturdy, sterling, good old English nature, that is, the sort of nature that we like best. In the present play, it is hard to determine which is the best—Miss Kelly's sulky suppressed abigail airs as Wishwell, her adroit irony and contemptuous expres-

sion of pity for Sir Solomon's credulity, or Dowton's deliberate manner of digesting his disgraces, chewing the cud of his misfortunes, and pocketting up his branching horns, in the latter character. Wishwell's tingling fingers, uplifted eyes, pouting mouth, bridling chin, and Sir Solomon's bronzed face, curling lips, blank looks, nods, winks, and shrugs, told their own story and kept their own secret (to themselves), as well as heart could wish. We have a stronger relish for this kind of dry pungent humour, than we have for the taste of olives.

The Inn-keeper's Daughter is a melo-drame founded on Mr. Southey's ballad of Mary the Maid of the Inn. The ballad is better than the melo-drame. The interest of the story is less in the latter, and the machinery is complicated, and moves slow.

Robinson Crusoe, the new melo-drame at Covent-Garden, is *not* the old favourite with the public. It has not the striking incident of the notched post, nor of the print of a human footstep in the sand; but there is a poodle dog in it, and innumerable savages, English and Caribbee.

DON JUAN.

King's Theatre, April 19, 1817.

MOZART'S celebrated Opera of Don Juan has been brought forward at this Theatre with every attraction, and with all the success which could be anticipated. The house was crowded to excess on Saturday week (the day of its being first brought out): on Tuesday it was but thinly attended. Why was this? Was it because the first representation did not answer the expectation of the public? No; but because Saturday is the fashionable day for going to the Opera, and Tuesday is not. On Saturday, therefore, the English are a musical public; and on Tuesday they are not a musical public: on Saturday they are all rapture and enthusiasm; and on Tuesday they are all coldness and indifference,—impose a periodical penance on themselves for the plenary indulgence of their last week's ecstacies, and have their

ears hermetically sealed to the charms of modulated sounds. Yet the writer of the preface to the translation of Don Juan assures us, that "the people of this country who frequent the Opera, are inferior to those of no other nation in their taste for fine music." That may be so. But still we doubt, if Don Juan, "the matchless work of its immortalized author," had been presented to the English public for the first time on Saturday week, without those wonderful helps to public taste and discernment, the name and reputation of the composer, whether it would have met with any better success than it did in Prague in 1787, or at Paris some years after, and whether we might not have had to observe of its representation at the King's Theatre, as GERAT, the singer, did of its representation at the *Academie de Musique; Don Juan a paru incognito à l'Opera!* The only convincing proof that the public, either in this country or on the Continent, are become more alive to "the refined and intellectual music" of Don Giovanni than they were thirty years ago, is—that the author is dead.

What inclines us the more to believe that the admiration of MOZART'S music in this instance is more a thing of rote than the consequence of any general feeling on the subject, is, that we hear of nothing but the sublimity and Shakespearian character of Don Juan. Now we con-

fess that, with the single exception of the Ghost scene, we not only do not feel any such general character of grand or strongly-contrasted expression pervading the composition, but we do not see any opportunity for it. Except the few words put into the mouth of the great Commander (Don Pedro) either as the horseman ghost, or the spectre-guest of Don Juan, which break upon the ear with a sort of awful murmur, like the sound of the last trumpet ringing in the hollow chambers of the dead, but which yet are so managed, that "airs from heaven" seem mingled with "blasts from hell," the rest of the Opera is scarcely any thing but gaiety, tenderness, and sweetness, from the first line to the last. To be sure, the part of the great Commander is a striking and lofty catastrophe to the piece; he does in some sort assume a voice of stern authority, which puts an end to the mirth, the dancing, the love and feasting, and drowns the sounds of the pipe, the lute, and the guitar, in a burst of rattling thunder; but even this thunder falls and is caught among its own echoes, that soften while they redouble the sound, and by its distant and varied accompaniment, soothes as much as it startles the ear. This short episode, which is included in four or five sentences printed in capital letters, is the only part of the opera which aims at the tragic: this part is not of a pure or unmixed species, but is very properly harmonized

with the rest of the composition, by middle and reflected tones; and all the other scenes are of one uniform, but exquisite character, a profusion of delicate airs and graces. Except, then, where the author reluctantly gives place to the Ghost-statue, or rather compromises matters with him, this opera is MOZART all over; it is no more like SHAKESPEAR, than CLAUDE LORRAINE is like RUBENS or MICHAEL ANGELO. It is idle to make the comparison. The personal character of the composer's mind, a light, airy, voluptuous spirit, is infused into every line of it; the intoxication of pleasure, the sunshine of hope, the dancing of the animal spirits, the bustle of action, the sinkings of tenderness and pity, are there, but nothing else. It is a kind of scented music; the ear imbibes an aromatic flavour from the sounds. It is like the breath of flowers; the sighing of balmy winds; or Zephyr with Flora playing; or the liquid notes of the nightingale wafted to the bosom of the bending rose. To show at once our taste or the want of it, the song of "La ci darem" gives us, we confess, both in itself, and from the manner in which it is sung by Madame FODOR, more pleasure than all the rest of the opera put together. We could listen to this air for ever—with certain intervals: the first notes give a throb of expectation to the heart, the last linger on the sense. We *encore* it greedily, with a sort of childish impatience

for new delight, and drink in the ethereal sounds, like draughts of earthly nectar. The heart is intoxicated through the ear; and feels in the tremulous accents of Zerlina's voice, all the varying emotions of tenderness, of doubt, of regret, and giddy rapture, as she resigns herself to her new lover. Madame FODOR's execution of her part of this duet was excellent. There is a clear, firm, silvery tone in her voice, like the reverberation of a tight-strung instrument, which by its contrast gives a peculiar effect to the more melting and subdued expression of particular passages, and which accords admirably with the idea of high health and spirits in the rustic character of Zerlina. We are tempted to say of her in this character, what SPENSER says of Belphebe,

" ——And when she spake,
" Sweet words like dropping honey she did shed,
" And twixt the pearls and rubies softly brake
" A silver sound, that heav'nly music seem'd to make."

She was less successful in the execution of the song to Massetto just after, " Batte, batte, Massetto:" for she seemed to sing it as if she had hardly learned it by heart. To this, however, she gave a characteristic simplicity of expression; she appeared in the first part as if she would willingly stand like a lamb, *come agnellina*, to be beaten by her provoked lover, and

afterwards, when she is reconciled to him, as if she was glad she had escaped a beating. Her song, *Vedrai carino,* promising him a remedy, when Massetto himself gets beaten, by offering him her heart, was charming, both from the execution of the air, and from the action with which she accompanied it.

Of the other performers we cannot speak so favourably. Signor AMBROGETTI gave considerable life and spirit to the part of Don Giovanni; but we neither saw the dignified manners of the Spanish nobleman, nor the insinuating address of the voluptuary. He makes too free and violent a use of his legs and arms. He sung the air, *Finche dal vino,* in which he anticipates an addition to his list of mistresses from the success of his entertainment, with a sort of jovial turbulent vivacity, but without the least "sense of amorous delight." His only object seemed to be, to sing the words as loud and as fast as possible. Nor do we think he gave to Don Juan's serenade, *Deh vieni alla finestra,* any thing like the spirit of fluttering apprehension and tenderness which characterises the original music. Signor AMBROGETTI's manner of acting in this scene was that of the successful and significant intriguer, but not of an intriguer—in love. Sensibility should be the ground-work of the expression: the cunning and address are only accessories.

NALDI's Leporello was much admired, and it

was not without its merits, though we cannot say that it gave us much pleasure. His humour is coarse and boisterous, and is more that of a buffoon than a comic actor. He treats the audience with the same easy cavalier airs that an impudent waiter at a French table-d'hôte does the guests as they arrive. The gross familiarity of his behaviour to Donna Elvira, in the song where he makes out the list of his master's mistresses, was certainly not in character; nor is there any thing in the words or the music to justify it. The tone and air which he should assume are those of pretended sympathy, mixed with involuntary laughter, not of wanton undisguised insult.

Signor CRIVELLI and Madame CAMPORESE did not add any particular prominence to the serious parts of Don Octavio, and Donna Anna. Signora HUGHES's Donna Elvira was successful beyond what we could have supposed. This lady at the Italian Opera is respectable: on the English stage she was formidable. Signor ANGRISANI *doubles* the part of Massetto and the Ghost. In the former, he displayed much drollery and *naiveté;* and in the latter, he was as solemn, terrific, and mysterious as a ghost should be. A new translation accompanies the Opera House edition of Don Giovanni. It is very well executed. But as it is not in verse, it might have been more literal, without being less elegant.

THE CONQUEST OF TARANTO.

Covent-Garden, April 26, 1817.

THE Conquest of Taranto continues to be acted here with a success proportionate to its merits. It is from the pen of Mr. DIMOND, whose productions are well known to the public, and which have so strong a family-likeness, that from having seen any one of them, we may form a tolerably correct idea of the rest. *Ex uno omnes.* His pieces have upon the whole been exceedingly popular, and we think deservedly so; for they have all the merit that belongs to the style of the drama to which he has devoted his talents,—a style which is a great favourite with an immense majority of the play-going public. This style may be called the *purely romantic;* there is little or nothing classical in it. The author does not profess to provide a public entertainment at his own entire expence, and from his own proper funds, but contracts with the managers to get up a striking and impressive ex-

hibition in conjunction with the scene-painter, the scene-shifter, the musical composer, the orchestra, the chorusses on the stage, and the *lungs* of the actors! It is a kind of *pic-nic* contribution, to which we sit down with a good appetite, and from which we come away quite satisfied, though our attention is somewhat distracted in the multitude of objects to which our gratitude is due for the pleasure we have received. The art of the romantic dramatist seems to be, to put ordinary characters in extraordinary situations, and to blend commonplace sentiments with picturesque scenery. The highest pathos is ushered in, and the mind prepared to indulge in all the luxury of woe, by the chaunting of music behind the scenes, as the blowing up of a mine of gunpowder gives the finishing stroke to the progress of the passions. The approach of a hero is announced by a blast of trumpets; the flute and flageolet breathe out the whole soul of the lover. Mr. Dimond is by no means jealous of the exclusive honours of the Tragic Muse; he is not at all disposed to make a monopoly of wit, genius, or reputation: he minds little but the conducting of his story to the end of the third act, and loses no opportunity of playing the game into the hands of his theatrical associates, so that they may supply his deficiencies, and all together produce a perfect piece. In the Conquest of Ta-

ranto the scene lies almost the whole time upon the beautiful sea-coast of Spain, and we do not feel the lack of descriptive poetry, while the eye is regaled with one continued panorama. In a word, the author resembles those painters of history who pay more attention to their background than their figures, to costume and drapery than to the expression of thought and sentiment.

The romantic drama, such as we have here described it, admits of various gradations, from the point where it unites with the pure tragic down to the melo-drame, and speaking pantomime, nor do we think that as it descends lower in its pretensions, its interest necessarily grows less. Where the regular drama studiously avails itself of the assistance of other arts, as painting and music, where the dialogue becomes the vehicle for connecting scenery, pantomime, and song in one dazzling and overpowering appeal to all our different faculties and senses, we are satisfied if the *tout ensemble* produces its effect, and do not enquire whether the work of the author alone, in a literary point of view, is proof against criticism. He is supposed to write for the stage "with all appliances and means to boot," not for the loneliness of the closet, and is little more than the ballet-master of the scene. He is not to enter into a competition with his assistants in the several depart-

ments of his art, but to avail himself of their resources. In the division of labour it is ridiculous to expect the same person to do the whole work. This would be double toil and trouble, and would, besides, answer no end. An appeal to the understanding or the imagination is superfluous, where the senses are assailed on all sides. What is the use of painting a landscape twice—to the ear as well as to the eye? What signify "the golden cadences of verse," when only employed to usher in a song? The gleams of wit or fancy glimmer but feebly on a stage blazing with phosphorus; and surely the Tragic Muse need not strain her voice so deep or high, while a poodle dog is barking fit to break his heart, in the most affecting part of the performance. We cannot attend to sounding epithets while a castle is tumbling about our ears, and it is sufficiently alarming to see an infant thrown from a precipice or hanging bridge into the foaming waves—reflections apart. Commonplace poetry is good enough as an accompaniment to all this; as very indifferent words are equally well set to the finest tunes.—So far then from joining in the common cry against Mr. Dimond's poetry as not rising above mediocrity, we should be sorry if he wrote better than he does. And what confirms us in this sentiment is, that those who have tried to do better have succeeded worse. The most ambitious writers

of the modern romantic drama are Mr. Coleridge and Mr. Maturin. But in the Remorse of the one, all Mr. Coleridge's metaphysics are lost in moonshine; and in Bertram and Don Manuel, the genius of poetry crowned with faded flowers, and seated on the top of tome high Gothic battlement, in vain breathes its votive accents amidst the sighing of the forest gale and the vespers of midnight monks. But enough of this.

There is considerable interest in the outline of the present play, and the events are ingeniously and impressively connected together, so as to excite and keep alive curiosity, and to produce striking situations. But to this production of external effect, character and probability are repeatedly sacrificed, and the actions which the different persons are made to perform, like stage-puppets, have no adequate motives. For instance, it is quite out of our common calculation of human nature, that Valencia (Mr. Macready) should betray his country to an enemy, because he is jealous of a rival in love; nor is there any thing in the previous character of Valencia to lead us to expect such an extreme violation of common sense and decency. Again, Rinaldo is betrayed to his dishonour, by acting contrary to orders and to his duty as a knight, at the first insidious suggestion of Valencia. The entrance of the Moors through the subterranean passage,

and the blowing up of the palace while the court are preparing to give a sort of *fête champêtre* in the middle of a siege, is not only surprising but ridiculous. Great praise is due to Mr. YOUNG as Aben Hamet, to Mr. MACREADY as Valencia, and to Mr. BOOTH as Rinaldo, for the force of their action, and the audibleness of their delivery:—perhaps for something more.—Miss STEPHENS, as Oriana's maid, sang several songs very prettily.

THE TOUCH-STONE.

Drury-Lane, May 10, 1817.

Mr. Kenney's new Comedy called The Touch-stone, or the World as it goes, has been acted here with great success. It possesses much liveliness and pleasantry in the incidents, and the dialogue is neat and pointed. The interest never flags, and is never wound up to a painful pitch. There are several *coups de théatre*, which shew that Mr. Kenney is an adept in his art, and has the stage and the actors before him while he is writing in his closet. The character of Dinah Cropley, which is admirably sustained by Miss Kelly, is the chief attraction of the piece. The author has contrived situations for this pretty little rustic, which bring out the exquisite *naiveté* and simple pathos of the actress in as great a degree as we ever saw them. Mr. Kenney, we understand, wrote this Comedy abroad; and there is a foreign air of homely con-

tentment and natural gaiety about the character of poor Dinah, like the idea we have of MARIVAUX's *Paysanne parvenue*. She seemed to have fed her chickens and turned her spinning-wheel in France, under more genial and better-tempered skies. Perhaps, however, this may be a mere prejudice in our minds, arising from our having lately seen Miss KELLY in such characters taken from French pieces. Her lover, HARLEY, (Peregrine Paragon), is of undoubted home growth. He is a very romantic, generous, amorous sort of simpleton, while he is poor; and for want of knowing better, thinks himself incorruptible, till temptation falls in his way, and then he turns out a very knave: and only saves his credit in the end by one of those *last act* repentances which are more pleasing than probable. He is in the first instance a poor country schoolmaster, who is engaged to marry Dinah Cropley, the daughter of a neighbouring farmer. They cannot, however, obtain the consent of their landlord and his sister (HOLLAND and Mrs. HARLOWE), the one a town coquette, the other a commercial gambler; when just in the nick of time, news is brought that HOLLAND is ruined by the failure of an extravagant speculation, and that a distant relation has left his whole fortune to HARLEY. The tables are now turned. HARLEY buys the mansion-house, furniture, and gardens, takes possession of them with highly

amusing airs of upstart vanity and self-importance; is flattered by the Squire's sister, who discards and is discarded by a broken fortune-hunting lover of the name of Garnish (WALLACK), makes proposals of marriage to her, and thinks no more of his old favourite Dinah. Garnish in the mean time finding the pliability of temper of Peregrine Paragon, Esq. and to make up for his disappointment in his own fortune-hunting scheme, sends for his sister (Mrs. ALSOP) whom he introduces to the said Peregrine Paragon. The forward pretensions of the two new candidates for his hand, form an amusing contrast with the sanguine hopes and rejected addresses of the old possessor of his heart, and some very ridiculous scenes take place, with one very affecting one, in which Miss KELLY makes a last vain appeal to her lover's fidelity, and (OXBERRY) her father watches the result with a mute wonderment and disappointed expectation infinitely natural, and well worth any body's seeing. By-and-bye it turns out that the fortune has been left not to HARLEY, but by a subsequent will to Miss KELLY, who is also a relation of the deceased, when instantly his two accomplished mistresses give over their persecution of him, their two brothers set off to make love to the new heiress, who exposes them both to the ridicule they deserve, and HARLEY, without knowing of the

change of fortune, is moved by a letter he receives from her, to repent just in time to prove himself not altogether unworthy of her hand.

Such is the outline of this Comedy. DOWTON acts the part of a friendly mediator, and spectator in the scene; and HUGHES makes a very fit representative of a shuffling, officious, pettifogging attorney. The most unpleasant part of the play was the undisguised mercenary profligacy of the four characters of WALLACK, HOLLAND, Mrs. ALSOP, and Mrs. HARLOWE: and a precious *partie quarrée* they are. The scrapes into which their folly and cunning lead them are, however, very amusing, and their unprincipled selfishness is very deservedly punished at last.

THE LIBERTINE.

Covent-Garden, May 24, 1817.

THE Libertine, an after-piece altered from SHADWELL'S play of that name, and founded on the story of Don Juan, with MOZART'S music, was represented here on Tuesday evening. Almost every thing else was against it, but the music triumphed. Still it had but half a triumph, for the songs were not *encored;* and when an attempt was made by some rash over-weening enthusiasts to *encore* the enchanting airs of MOZART, that heavy German composer, "that dull Beotian genius," as he has been called by a lively verbal critic of our times, the English, disdaining this insult offered to our native talents, *hissed*—in the plenitude of their pampered grossness, and "ignorant impatience" of foreign refinement and elegance, they hissed! We believe that unconscious patriotism has something to do with this as well as sheer stu-

pidity: they think that a real taste for the Fine Arts, unless they are of British growth and manufacture, is a sign of disaffection to the Government, and that there must be "something rotten in the state of Denmark," if their ears, as well as their hearts, are not true English. We have heard sailors' songs by Little SMITH, and Yorkshire songs by EMERY, and the Death of NELSON by Mr. SINCLAIR, *encored* again and again at Covent-Garden, so as almost "to split the ears of the groundlings," yet the other night they would not hear of *encoring* Miss STEPHENS, either in the Duet with DURUSET, *La ci darem*, nor in the song appealing for his forgiveness, *Batte, Massetto;* yet at the Opera they tolerate Madame FODOR in repeating both these songs, because they suppose it to be the etiquette, and would have you believe that they do not very warmly insist on the repetition of the last song she sings there, out of tenderness to the actress, not to spare their own ears, which are soon cloyed with sweetness, and delight in nothing but noise and fury.

We regard Miss STEPHENS's Zerlina as a failure, whether we compare her with Madame FODOR in the same part, or with herself in other parts. She undoubtedly sung her songs with much sweetness and simplicity, but her simplicity had something of insipidity in it; her tones wanted the fine, rich, *pulpy* essence of

Madame Fodor's, the elastic impulse of health and high animal spirits; nor had her manner of giving the different airs that laughing, careless grace which gives to Madame Fodor's singing all the ease and spirit of conversation. There was some awkwardness necessarily arising from the transposition of the songs, particularly of the duet between Zerlina and Don Giovanni, which was given to Massetto, because Mr. Charles Kemble is not a singer, and which by this means lost its exquisite appropriateness of expression. Of Mr. Duruset's Massetto we shall only say, that it is not so good as Angrisani's. He would however have made a better representative of the statue of Don Pedro than Mr. Chapman, who is another gentleman who has not "a singing face," and whom it would therefore have been better to leave out of the Opera than the songs; particularly than that fine one, answering to *Di rider finira pria della Aurora*, which Mr. Chapman was mounted on horseback on purpose, it should seem, *neither to sing nor say!*

Mr. Charles Kemble did not play the Libertine well. Instead of the untractable, fiery spirit, the unreclaimable licentiousness of Don Giovanni, he was as tame as any saint;

"And of his port as meek as is a maid."

He went through the different exploits of

wickedness assigned him with evident marks of reluctance and contrition; and it seemed the height of injustice that so well meaning a young man, forced into acts of villainy against his will, should at last be seized upon as their lawful prize by fiends come hot from hell with flaming torches, and that he should sink into a lake of burning brimstone on a splendid car brought to receive him by the devil, in the likeness of a great dragon, writhing round and round upon a wheel of fire—an exquisite device of the Managers, superadded to the original story, and in striking harmony with MOZART'S music! Mr. LISTON'S Leporello was not quite what we wished it. He played it in a mixed style between a burlesque imitation of the Italian Opera, and his own *inimitable* manner. We like him best when he is his own great original, and copies only himself—

"None but himself can be his parallel."

He did not sing the song of Madamira half so well, nor with half the impudence of NALDI. Indeed, all the performers seemed, instead of going their lengths on the occasion, to be upon their good behaviour, and instead of entering into their parts, to be thinking of the comparison between themselves and the performers at the Opera. We cannot say it was in their favour.

BARBAROSSA.

Drury-Lane, May 31, 1817.

Mr. Kean had for his benefit on Monday, Barbarossa, and the musical after-piece of Paul and Virginia. In the tragedy there was nothing for him to do, and it is only when there is nothing for him to do, that he does nothing. The scene in which he throws off his disguise as a slave, and declares himself to be Achmet, the heir to the throne, which Barbarossa has usurped by the murder of his father, was the only one of any effect. We are sorry that Mr. Kean repeats this character *till further notice.* In Paul we liked him exceedingly: but we should have liked him better, if he had displayed fewer of the graces and intricacies of the art. The tremulous deliberation with which he introduced some of these ornamental flourishes, put us a little in mind of the perplexity of the lover in

the Tatler, who was at a loss in addressing his mistress whether he should say,

> " —And when your song you sing,
> " Your song you sing with so much art,"

Or,

> " —And when your song you sing,
> You sing your song with so much art."

As Mr. BICKERSTAFF, who was applied to by the poet, declined deciding on this nice point, so we shall not decide whether Mr. KEAN sung well or ill, but leave it to be settled by the connoisseurs and the ladies. His voice is clear, full, and sweet to a degree of tenderness. Miss MANGEON played Virginia, and in so doing, did not spoil one of the most pleasing recollections of our boyish reading days, which we have still treasured up " in our heart's core, aye, in our best of hearts."

MRS. SIDDONS'S LADY MACBETH.

Covent-Garden, June 7, 1817.

MRS. SIDDONS's appearance in Lady Macbeth at this Theatre on Thursday, drew immense crowds to every part of the house. We should suppose that more than half the number of persons were compelled to return without gaining admittance. We succeeded in gaining a seat in one of the back-boxes, and saw this wonderful performance at a distance, and consequently at a disadvantage. Though the distance of place is a disadvantage to a performance like Mrs. SIDDONS's Lady Macbeth, we question whether the distance of time at which we have formerly seen it is any. It is nearly twenty years since we first saw her in this character, and certainly the impression which we have still left on our minds from that first exhibition, is stronger than the one we received the other evening. The sublimity of Mrs. SIDDONS's acting is such, that the first impulse

which it gives to the mind can never wear out, and we doubt whether this original and paramount impression is not weakened, rather than strengthened, by subsequent repetition. We do not read the tragedy of the Robbers twice; if we have seen Mrs. SIDDONS in Lady Macbeth only once, it is enough. The impression is stamped there for ever, and any after-experiments and critical enquiries only serve to fritter away and tamper with the sacredness of the early recollection. We see into the details of the character, its minute excellencies or defects, but the great masses, the gigantic proportions, are in some degree lost upon us by custom and familiarity. It is the first blow that staggers us; by gaining time we recover our self-possession. Mrs. SIDDONS's Lady Macbeth is little less appaling in its effects than the apparition of a preternatural being; but if we were accustomed to see a preternatural being constantly, our astonishment would by degrees diminish.

We do not know whether it is owing to the cause here stated, or to a falling-off in Mrs. SIDDONS's acting, but we certainly thought her performance the other night inferior to what it used to be. She speaks too slow, and her manner has not that decided, sweeping majesty, which used to characterise her as the Muse of Tragedy herself. Something of apparent indecision is perhaps attributable to the circumstance of her only

acting at present on particular occasions. An actress who appears only once a-year cannot play so well as if she was in the habit of acting once a-week. We therefore wish Mrs. SIDDONS would either return to the stage, or retire from it altogether. By her present uncertain wavering between public and private life, she may diminish her reputation, while she can add nothing to it.

MR. MAYWOOD'S SHYLOCK.

Drury-Lane.

MR. MAYWOOD, from the Theatre Royal Glasgow, of whom report had spoken highly, and we think not undeservedly so, appeared here in the part of Shylock. He was received throughout with very great applause; nor was there any part of his performance at which the slightest disapprobation was expressed. His figure is rather short; his face, though not regularly formed, expressive; his voice full, and capable of great depth of intonation; his attitudes firm and well conceived: the most spirited scene, we thought, was that in which Tubal brings him information of Antonio's losses and impending ruin, and of his daughter's waste of his money. His exclamation, "Thank God! thank God!" on hearing of the shipwreck, was as animated as any thing we ever heard. In the last scene, the glare of malignity with which

he eyed Antonio after his defeated revenge recoils upon his own head, was truly terrific. Upon the whole, we consider this gentleman as an acquisition to the tragic strength of the theatre; and are persuaded that what seemed the principal defect in his performance, an occasional want of decision of tone, and firmness of action, was attributable only to that diffidence which is natural to a young actor on his first appearance before a London audience, in a part of so much prominence, and which has been so ably filled of late.

MR. KEMBLE'S RETIREMENT.

Covent-Garden, June 25, 1817.

MR. KEMBLE took his leave of the Stage on Monday night, in the character of Coriolanus. On his first coming forward to pronounce his Farewell Address, he was received with a shout like thunder: on his retiring after it, the applause was long before it subsided entirely away. There is something in these partings with old public favourites exceedingly affecting. They teach us the shortness of human life, and the vanity of human pleasures. Our associations of admiration and delight with theatrical performers, are among our earliest recollections—among our last regrets. They are links that connect the beginning and the end of life together; *their* bright and giddy career of popularity measures the arch that spans our brief existence. It is near twenty years ago since we first saw Mr. Kemble in the same character—yet how short

the interval seems! The impression appears as distinct as if it were of yesterday. In fact, intellectual objects, in proportion as they are lasting, may be said to shorten life. Time has no effect upon them. The petty and the personal, that which appeals to our senses and our interests, is by degrees forgotten, and fades away into the distant obscurity of the past. The grand and the ideal, that which appeals to the imagination, can only perish with it, and remains with us, unimpaired in its lofty abstraction, from youth to age; as, wherever we go, we still see the same heavenly bodies shining over our heads! We forget numberless things that have happened to ourselves, one generation of follies after another; but not the first time of our seeing Mr. KEMBLE, nor shall we easily forget the last! Coriolanus, the character in which he took his leave of the Stage, was one of the first in which we remember to have seen him; and it was one in which we were not sorry to part with him, for we wished to see him appear like himself to the last. Nor was he wanting to himself on this occasion: he played the part as well as he ever did—with as much freshness and vigour. There was no abatement of spirit and energy—none of grace and dignity: his look, his action, his expression of the character, were the same as they ever were: they could not be finer. It is mere cant, to say that Mr. KEMBLE has quite fallen off

of late—that he is not what he was: he may have fallen off in the opinion of some jealous admirers, because he is no longer in exclusive possession of the Stage: but in himself he has not fallen off a jot. Why then do we approve of his retiring? Because we do not wish him to wait till it is *necessary* for him to retire. On the last evening, he displayed the same excellences, and gave the same prominence to the very same passages, that he used to do. We might refer to his manner of doing obeisance to his mother in the triumphal procession in the second act, and to the scene with Aufidius in the last act, as among the most striking instances. The action with which he accompanied the proud taunt to Aufidius—

> " Like an eagle in a dove-cote, I
> " Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli;
> " Alone I did it—"

gave double force and beauty to the image. Again, where he waits for the coming of Aufidius in his rival's house, he stood at the foot of the statue of Mars, himself another Mars! In the reconciliation scene with his mother, which is the finest in the play, he was not equally impressive. Perhaps this was not the fault of Mr. KEMBLE, but of the stage itself, which can hardly do justice to such thoughts and sentiments as here occur:

" ——— My mother bows:
" As if Olympus to a mole-hill should
" In supplication nod."

Mr. KEMBLE's voice seemed to faint and stagger, to be strained and cracked, under the weight of this majestic image: but, indeed, we know of no tones deep or full enough to bear along the swelling tide of sentiment it conveys; nor can we conceive any thing in outward form to answer to it, except when Mrs. SIDDONS played the part of Volumnia.

We may on this occasion be expected to say a few words on the general merits of Mr. KEMBLE as an actor, and on the principal characters he performed; in doing which, we shall

" ——— Nothing extenuate,
" Nor set down aught in malice."

It has always appeared to us, that the range of characters in which Mr. KEMBLE more particularly shone, and was superior to every other actor, were those which consisted in the developement of some one solitary sentiment or exclusive passion. From a want of rapidity, of scope, and variety, he was often deficient in expressing the bustle and complication of different interests; nor did he possess the faculty of overpowering the mind by sudden and irresistible bursts of passion: but in giving the habitual workings of

a predominant feeling, as in Penruddock, or The Stranger, in Coriolanus, Cato, and some others, where all the passions move round a central point, and are governed by one master-key, he stood unrivalled. Penruddock, in The Wheel of Fortune, was one of his most correct and interesting performances, and one of the most perfect on the modern stage. The deeply-rooted, mild, pensive melancholy of the character, its embittered recollections, and dignified benevolence, were conveyed by Mr. KEMBLE with equal truth, elegance, and feeling. In The Stranger, again, which is in fact the same character, he brooded over the recollection of disappointed hope till it became a part of himself; it sunk deeper into his mind the longer he dwelt upon it; his regrets only became more profound as they became more durable. His person was moulded to the character. The weight of sentiment which oppressed him was never suspended: the spring at his heart was never lightened —it seemed as if his whole life had been a suppressed sigh! So in Coriolanus, he exhibited the ruling passion with the same unshaken firmness, he preserved the same haughty dignity of demeanour, the same energy of will, and unbending sternness of temper throughout. He was swayed by a single impulse. His tenaciousness of purpose was only irritated by opposition; he turned neither to the right nor the left; the

vehemence with which he moved forward increasing every instant, till it hurried him on to the catastrophe. In Leontes, also, in The Winter's Tale (a character he at one time played often), the growing jealousy of the King, and the exclusive possession which this passion gradually obtains over his mind, were marked by him in the finest manner, particularly where he exclaims—

" ——— Is whispering nothing?
" Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses?
" Kissing with inside lip? Stopping the career
" Of laughter with a sigh (a note infallible
" Of breaking honesty)? Horsing foot on foot?
" Skulking in corners? Wishing clocks more swift?
" Hours minutes? The noon midnight? and all eyes
" Blind with the pin and web, but their's; their's only,
" That would unseen be wicked? Is this nothing?
" Why then the world and that's in't is nothing,
" The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia's nothing,
" My wife is nothing, if this be nothing!"

In the course of this enumeration, every proof told stronger, and followed with quicker and harder strokes; his conviction became more rivetted at every step of his progress; and at the end, his mind, and "every corporal agent," appeared wound up to a phrenzy of despair. In such characters, Mr. KEMBLE had no occasion to call to his aid either the resources of inven-

tion, or the tricks of the art: his success depended on the increasing intensity with which he dwelt on a given feeling, or enforced a passion that resisted all interference or control.

In Hamlet, on the contrary, Mr. KEMBLE in our judgment unavoidably failed from a want of flexibility, of that quick sensibility which yields to every motive, and is borne away with every breath of fancy which is distracted in the multiplicity of its reflections, and lost in the uncertainty of its resolutions. There is a perpetual undulation of feeling in the character of Hamlet; but in Mr. KEMBLE's acting, "there was neither variableness nor shadow of turning." He played it like a man in armour, with a determined inveteracy of purpose, in one undeviating straight line, which is as remote from the natural grace and indolent susceptibility of the character, as the sharp angles and abrupt starts to produce an effect which Mr. KEAN throws into it.

In King John, which was one of Mr. KEMBLE's most admired parts, the transitions of feeling, though just and powerful, were prepared too long beforehand, and were too long in executing to produce their full effect. The actor seemed waiting for some complicated machinery to enable him to make his next movement, instead of trusting to the true impulses of passion. There was no sudden colli-

sion of opposite elements; the golden flash of genius was not there; "the fire i' th' flint was cold," for it was not struck. If an image could be constructed by magic art to play King John, it would play it in much the same manner that Mr. KEMBLE played it.

In Macbeth, Mr. KEMBLE was unequal to "the tug and war" of the passions which assail him: he stood as it were at bay with fortune, and maintained his ground too steadily against "fate and metaphysical aid;" instead of staggering and reeling under the appalling visions of the preternatural world, and having his frame wrenched from all the holds and resting places of his will, by the stronger power of imagination. In the latter scenes, however, he displayed great energy and spirit; and there was a fine melancholy retrospective tone in his manner of delivering the lines,

"My way of life has fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf,"

which smote upon the heart, and remained there ever after. His Richard III. wanted that tempest and whirlwind of the soul, that life and spirit, and dazzling rapidity of motion, which fills the stage, and burns in every part of it, when Mr. KEAN performs this character. To Mr. KEAN'S acting in general, we might apply the lines of the poet, where he describes

" The fiery soul that, working out its way,
" Fretted the pigmy body to decay,
" And o'er-inform'd the tenement of clay."

Mr. KEMBLE'S manner, on the contrary, had always something dry, hard, and pedantic in it. " You shall relish him more in the scholar than the soldier:" but his monotony did not fatigue, his formality did not displease; because there was always sense and meaning in what he did. The fineness of Mr. KEMBLE'S figure may be supposed to have led to that statue-like appearance, which his acting was sometimes too apt to assume: as the diminutiveness of Mr. KEAN'S person has probably compelled him to bustle about too much, and to attempt to make up for the want of dignity of form, by the violence and contrast of his attitudes. If Mr. KEMBLE were to remain in the same posture for half an hour, his figure would only excite admiration: if Mr. KEAN were to stand still only for a moment, the contrary effect would be apparent. One of the happiest and most spirited of all Mr. KEMBLE'S performances, and in which even his defects were blended with his excellences to produce a perfect whole, was his Pierre. The dissolute indifference assumed by this character, to cover the darkness of his designs, and the fierceness of his revenge, accorded admirably with Mr. KEMBLE'S natural manner; and the tone of morbid rancorous raillery, in which Pierre de-

lights to indulge, was in unison with the actor's reluctant, contemptuous personifications of gaiety, with the scornful spirit of his Comic Muse, which always laboured—*invita Minerva*—against the grain. Cato was another of those parts for which Mr. KEMBLE was peculiarly fitted by his physical advantages. There was nothing for him to do in this character, but to appear in it. It had all the dignity of still-life. It was a studied piece of classical costume—a conscious exhibition of elegantly disposed drapery, that was all: yet, as a mere display of personal and artificial grace, it was inimitable.

It has been suggested that Mr. KEMBLE chiefly excelled in his Roman characters, and among others in Brutus. If it be meant, that he excelled in those which imply a certain stoicism of feeling and energy of will, this we have already granted; but Brutus is not a character of this kind, and Mr. KEMBLE failed in it for that reason. Brutus is not a stoic, but a humane enthusiast. There is a tenderness of nature under the garb of assumed severity; an inward current of generous feelings, which burst out, in spite of circumstances, with bleeding freshness; a secret struggle of mind, and disagreement between his situation and his intentions; a lofty inflexibility of purpose, mingled with an effeminate abstractedness of thought, which Mr. KEMBLE did not give.

In short, we think the distinguishing excellence of his acting may be summed up in one word—*intensity;* in the seizing upon some one feeling or idea, in insisting upon it, in never letting it go, and in working it up, with a certain graceful consistency, and conscious grandeur of conception, to a very high degree of pathos or sublimity. If he had not the unexpected bursts of nature and genius, he had all the regularity of art; if he did not display the tumult and conflict of opposite passions in the soul, he gave the deepest and most permanent interest to the uninterrupted progress of individual feeling; and in embodying a high idea of certain characters, which belong rather to sentiment than passion, to energy of will, than to loftiness or to originality of imagination, he was the most excellent actor of his time. This praise of him is not exaggerated: the blame we have mixed with it is not invidious. We have only to add to both, the expression of our grateful remembrances and best wishes—Hail, and farewell!

THE END.

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